the weekly
Standard

MAY 6, 1996 $2.95

VEEPSTAKES

The bloody, dirty battle for the vice presidency

by Fred Barnes

Humiliating Warren Christopher
CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

Prestigious People Need More Money!
DAVID BROOKS

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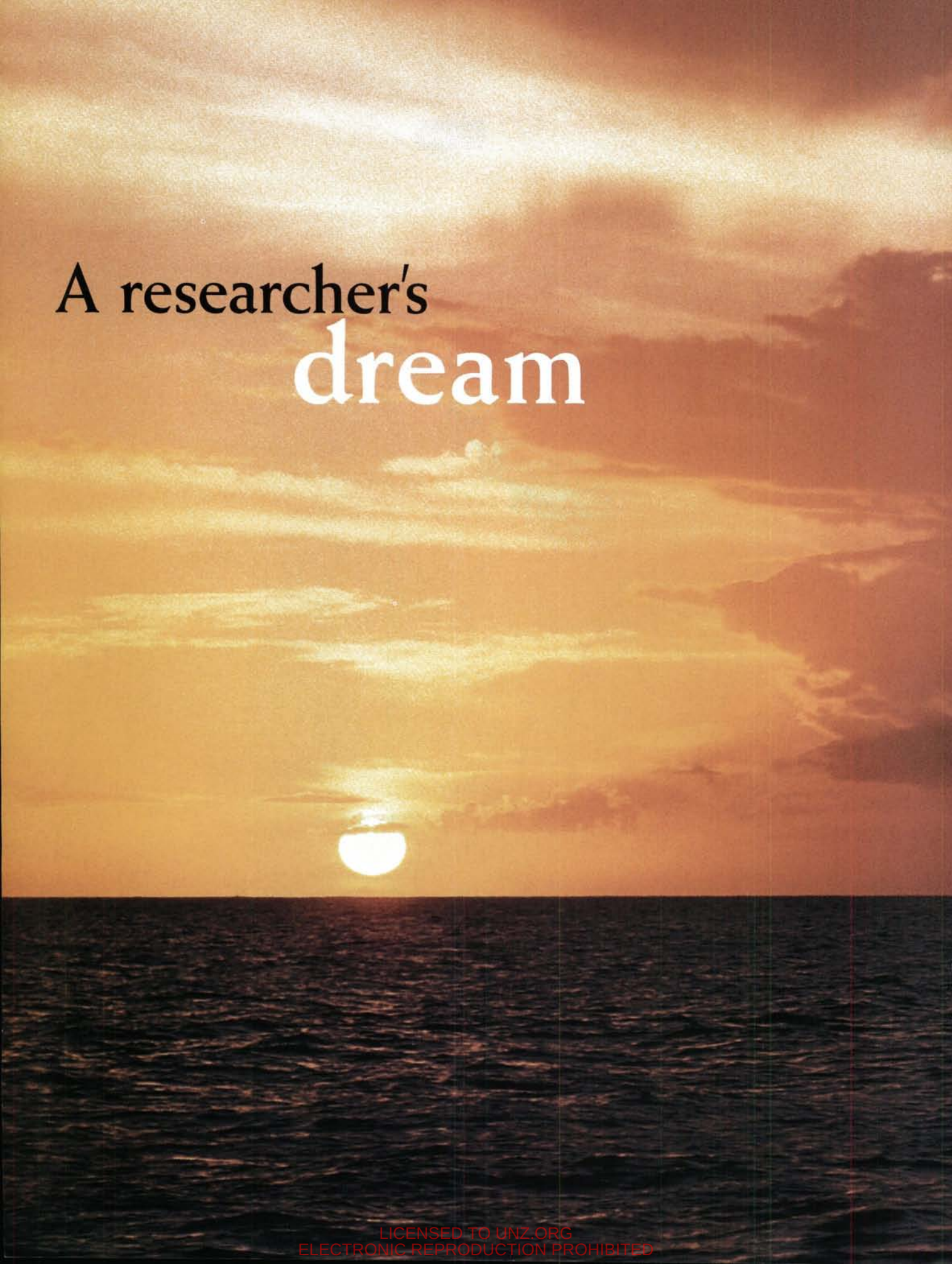
A researcher's dream



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We take it for granted,
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An Open Letter to the Congress of the United States

Millions of Americans, of all ages, educations and incomes, have mental illnesses. Mental disorders can be as debilitating as heart disease and cancer. Like heart disease, diabetes and cancer, mental illness can be successfully treated.

With the proper treatment, people with mental disorders can become fully productive workers and active members of their communities.

We strongly urge Congress to treat mental illness on an equal basis with other diseases. We strongly believe that Congress should not discriminate against those millions of Americans who have a mental illness — thousands in every congressional district.

While standing up for the fair and humane treatment of all constituents, we urge Congress to please support equal, non-discriminatory treatment and coverage of mental illness in any healthcare reform legislation.

Mental illness coverage.
It's time to be fair by treating it equally in health care.

The Access Network, Duane J. Etienne, President/CEO, Indianapolis, IN
Acordia of Central Florida, Stephen T. Smith, Executive Vice President, Clearwater, FL
Atlanta Black United Fund, Inc., Lamont Cassett, Executive Director, Atlanta, GA
American Legion Pioneer Post No. 66, Edward E. Taylor, Post Adjutant, Ogden, UT
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Indiana Towing & Wrecker Association, Garry J. Schroll, President, Michigan City, IN
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La Barge Electronics, Joyce O'Neal, Administrative Manager, Tulsa, OK
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New York State Grange, William S. Benson, Legislative Coordinator, Cortland, NY
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Oklahoma National Senior Service Corps Directors Association, Elizabeth A. Patterson, President, Midwest City, OK
PennAg Industries Association, David R. Brubaker, Executive Vice President/CEO, Ephrata, PA
Retired & Senior Volunteer Program, Margaret Cain, Office Manager, Indianapolis, IN
Rising Sun Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 2819, James P. Mulvey, Steward/Manager, Philadelphia, PA
RSVP in the Capital Region (New York State), Virginia A. Gilbert, Director, Albany, NY
Senior Connections, Inc., Cecile A. Comrie, Director of In-Home Services, Decatur, GA
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the weekly Standard

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THE WEEKLY STANDARD (ISSN 1083-3013), Vol. 1, Number 33, May 6, 1996. Published 50 times annually by News America Publishing Incorporated, 1211 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY, 10036. Second-Class postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Send subscription orders to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 96153, Washington, DC 20090-6153. Yearly subscriptions, $79.96; Canadian, $99.96; foreign postage extra. Cover price, $2.95 ($3.50 Canadian). Back issues, $3.50 (includes postage and handling). Subscribers: Please send all remittances, address changes, and subscription inquiries to: THE WEEKLY STANDARD, Customer Service, P.O. Box 710, Radnor, PA 19088-0710. If possible include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. For subscription customer service, call 1-800-983-7600. Send manuscripts and letters to the editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. The Weekly Standard Advertising Sales Office in Washington, DC, is (202) 293-4900. Advertising Production: call Natalie Harwood, (610) 293-8540. Postmaster: Send address changes to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 930, Radnor, PA 19088-0930. Copyright 1995, News America Publishing Incorporated. All rights reserved. No material in THE WEEKLY STANDARD may be reprinted without permission of the copyright owner. THE WEEKLY STANDARD is a trademark of News America Publishing Incorporated.

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Newt Goes the Minimum

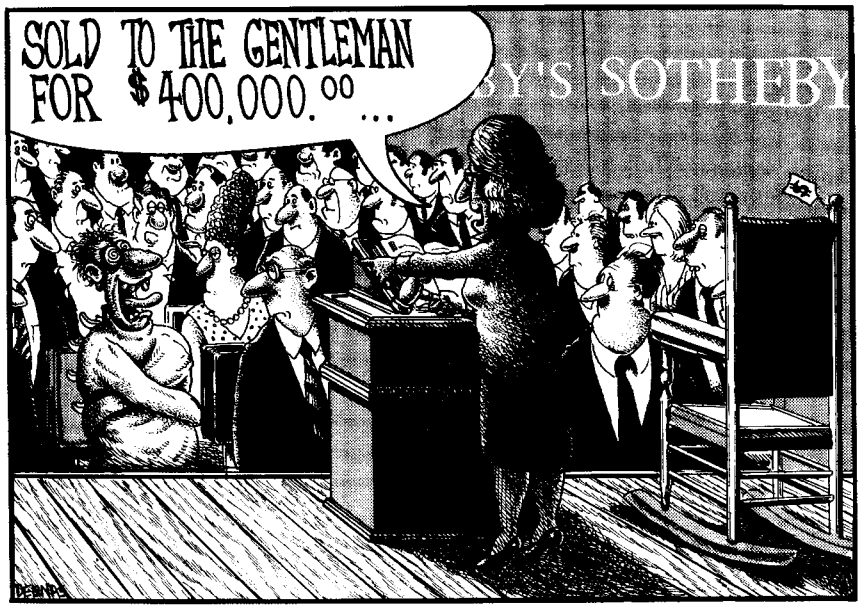
House speaker Newt Gingrich boasted to Paul Gigot of the *Wall Street Journal* that, for all his troubles, he's never lost a vote on the House floor. True, but he did lose a vote in the House Republican leadership on hiking the minimum wage.

Terrified by polls showing that 80 percent of Americans favor a boost, Gingrich sent instructions on April 21 that no House Republican should publicly criticize the minimum wage. His order was passed to GOP leaders by an aide, because Gingrich was in New York at the time. Chris Cox of California, who heads the House Republican Policy Committee, was the first to challenge it.

Later, majority leader Dick Armey, whip Tom DeLay, and deputy whip Dennis Hastert all took on Gingrich, forcing him to change course and hold off on scheduling a vote on the minimum wage. Gingrich demanded one thing in return: Republicans must come up with their own plans to help working families.

That may take some time, though Armey began outlining an approach last week that would involve reforming the controversial Earned Income Tax Credit. But David McIntosh of Indiana proposed hearings before his subcommittee on cutting regulations that currently discourage businesses from paying higher wages and hiring more workers. Gingrich liked the idea. The first hearing is May 16.

Meanwhile, at the Jackie O. Auction ...



Like a Phoenix from the Ashes

As Bob Dole's spring slide continues—he trails Bill Clinton by 18 points in a recent national poll conducted by the *Los Angeles Times*—he's making life a little difficult for the folks at the Republican National Committee. Every Monday, they fax out a nifty summary of polling data showcasing Republican popularity. The RNC's lead item on April 22, titled "Dole Rising in Arizona," trumpeted Dole's two-point lead over Bill Clinton . . . in Arizona and Virginia. A GOP presidential candidate hasn't lost in Virginia since 1964, and in Arizona since 1948. It's a bad sign when the best the RNC can come up with is a two-point margin in reliably Republican states.

Perhaps the RNC should praise Dole for his candor, rather than his poll ratings. On *Face the Nation,* Dole was asked about his comment days earlier that parents would be safer leaving their kids with him than with Bill Clinton. Dole replied, "It's what a couple of people have told me who've had focus groups. . . . I'm just repeating what the focus groups said." Many pols get their ideas from focus groups and polling data, but few are so upfront about it. At last, the truth has been spoken: America deserves a leader as good as its focus groups.

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Scrapbook

Perot's September Surprise?

In March, Ross Perot gave an extraordinary interview to Dan Balz of the *Washington Post*. "You're not going to believe this," Perot told Balz, but in 1993 "one of the two parties called up" and "wanted me to give a million dollars for dirty tricks" against the other party. The approach to Perot supposedly featured the unnamed dirty trickster laying out the tales his party was going to spread about the other party.

"Is that true?" Perot said he asked the trickster. "No," he said the trickster replied, "but it'll work."

Seems a bit stilted, no? Like dialogue out of a TV movie? The leaders of both parties denied any such conversation ever took place, but Perot aired the charge again on the April 21 *Meet the Press*. Asked on live television by David Broder about his "strange, unsubstantiated" tale, Perot seemed defensive but insisted he had the name of at least one person who attended the meeting in question and asked for the dirty-tricks money. "That happened," Perot said, "no ifs, ands, or buts."

Pressed for the trickster's name, the wily tycoon played coy, replying instead with a trademark non sequitur about professional wrestling. Sometime this fall, Perot said, "I will make [the name] clear." In the meantime, he offered this tantalizing hint: "Haley Barbour was not directly involved, but in this case, I would see that he do a little bit of diligence up and down the chain of command, and I would say after about 15 minutes, you know, one of the two parties is going to say 'Ooops!'"

Who could this trickster be? Let's think for a minute. Since there *is* nobody above RNC chief Haley Barbour in the Republican party's chain of command, that would leave a Barbour underling as the main suspect in Perot's latest psychodrama. And since Perot rarely says anything, no matter how demented, except in the hope of political gain, the mystery man would probably be connected in some way to one of the two other men running for president this fall.

Which leaves one likely target of Perot's ludicrous allegation: Scott Reed, now Bob Dole's campaign manager—and at one time, conveniently enough, Haley Barbour's chief of staff. Imagine it's September and Perot has announced a campaign for president. What better way to get some ink and throw the Dole campaign off-balance than to try to tar Scott Reed with this absurdity?

It all fits perfectly. *Too* perfectly, as Perot himself might say.

The Reading List

In honor of the current war/peace/electoral hijinks in the Middle East, the Reading List thought readers puzzled by the elaborate politics of Arab countries might profit from reading some of the great British nonfiction literature about the area:

Travels in Arabia Deserta, by Charles Doughty. We know of no other work like this massive 19th-century first-person account, largely concerned with the *haj* to Mecca and written in an original and unduplicatable voice that is half *Pilgrim's Progress*, half Sir Walter Scott.

Arabian Sands, by Wilfred Thesiger. A gorgeous 20th-century description of the Rub al-Khali—the Empty Quarter, the vast patch of desert on the Arabian peninsula.

The Seven Pillars of Wisdom, by T. E. Lawrence. Even if you loved *Lawrence of Arabia*, based largely on this book, you will be dazzled by this frank, uninhibited memoir, one of the seminal autobiographies of our time. (Pun intended.)

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Casual

"People Persons" Sell Their Wares

Every year around this time, thousands of college seniors prepare their resumés to send to prospective employers. Cramming a lifetime's worth of experience onto a page or two is apt to be unpleasant for anyone, and for students it is often especially anxiety-producing, a stark reminder that four years of beer and 19th-century feminist literature don't necessarily add up to credentials for a job. But what about employers? What's the process like from their end? To find out, I spent an afternoon leafing through a pile of resumés and cover letters sent by undergraduates to businesses and think tanks in Washington. Writing resumés, it turns out, is the easy part. Reading them is the challenge.

The first thing one notices about a stack of college resumés is their startling sameness. Each seems to follow an identical format: At the top, beneath name and address, sits the "Career Objective," a pithy statement of intent, which is followed by the "Experience" category. "Experience" is the heart of the resumé, and as if to prove it, each line begins with an aggressive verb. Applicants haven't simply "worked" at previous jobs, they've "pursued" or "utilized" or "coordinated" them. Some have even "scheduled" or "organized" or "developed." Still others have "facilitated." And, of course, every resumé bottoms out with the same wooden declaration: "References Available Upon Request."

If college resumés seem as uniform as Model Ts, it's no accident—they're produced in much the same mechanized way. Judith Gumbiner, director of Career Services at San Diego State University and a resumé consultant since 1967, boasts that her school's career counseling office has "computer programs where students can input their data and [the resumé] comes out on a laser printer," complete with action verbs attached. In one case, Gumbiner remembers, an enterprising student added his own personal touch, capitalizing the first letter of each verb on his resumé in descending order until they spelled out a message in acrostic code: "MUST HIRE," it read. Gumbiner seems impressed as she recalls the innovation. "We encourage students to be as creative as possible," she says. And no wonder: "It's a very humbling thought to think someone could summarize their life in one paragraph."

If so, most undergraduates don't seem to realize it. Humility—indeed, any sense of perspective—seems in short supply on many resumés. "If you are interested in adding a bright, fresh, talented professional to your creative staff"—and, hey, who isn't?—"you will want to consider the enclosed resumé," advises one cover letter. A job in Washington, predicts a Penn State student, will "help me become more influential in the legislative process." One young scholar from California boasts of her high-school diploma, awarded "Magna Cum Laudi." Yet another applicant decides to skip the small talk: "I know I am extremely qualified for this position," he writes, adding, "I firmly believe that the United States of America is one of the most influential country in the world."

What gives these resumé writers such confidence in their own abilities? For the answer, employers are advised to look under the heading "Skills." In this space, one applicant lists "getting things done" and, cryptically, "people contact." Another touts his accomplishments in "telephone answering, photocopying, and check cashing." A great number of resumé writers claim to have abundant "interpersonal communications skills"; at least one turns out to be a "people person." An art-minded applicant includes a poem about date rape, while another lists her involvement with "Step Aerobics" as a qualification for the job.

It is true that college students can't be expected to have too many relevant or scintillating life experiences to add to their resumés. But they can be expected to make some up. An enterprising applicant should take the time to come up with some imaginative padding. A Victoria Cross for valor, perhaps, or a year spent bathing lepers in Calcutta. Alas, even simple lying seems beyond the grasp of many college students.

For the most part, the resumés reveal only boilerplate exaggerations, usually thick language lamely designed to cover boring summer jobs with a patina of danger or excitement. One Georgetown University student, describing work as a sales clerk, touts his expertise in "8-line telephone management." Another brags of being the "Risk Management Chair" at his fraternity. As part of her waitressing job, writes one applicant, she "addressed questions concerning the restaurant." ("Excuse me, Miss, where can I find the men's room?")

A college graduate with "superb interpersonal communication skills" probably can do a decent job opening mail in a senator's office or tending the fax machine in a think tank. Still, you've got to wonder. As one applicant puts it in his cover note, "Along with this letter, I am obtaining as resumés of myself." That's for sure.

Tucker Carlson

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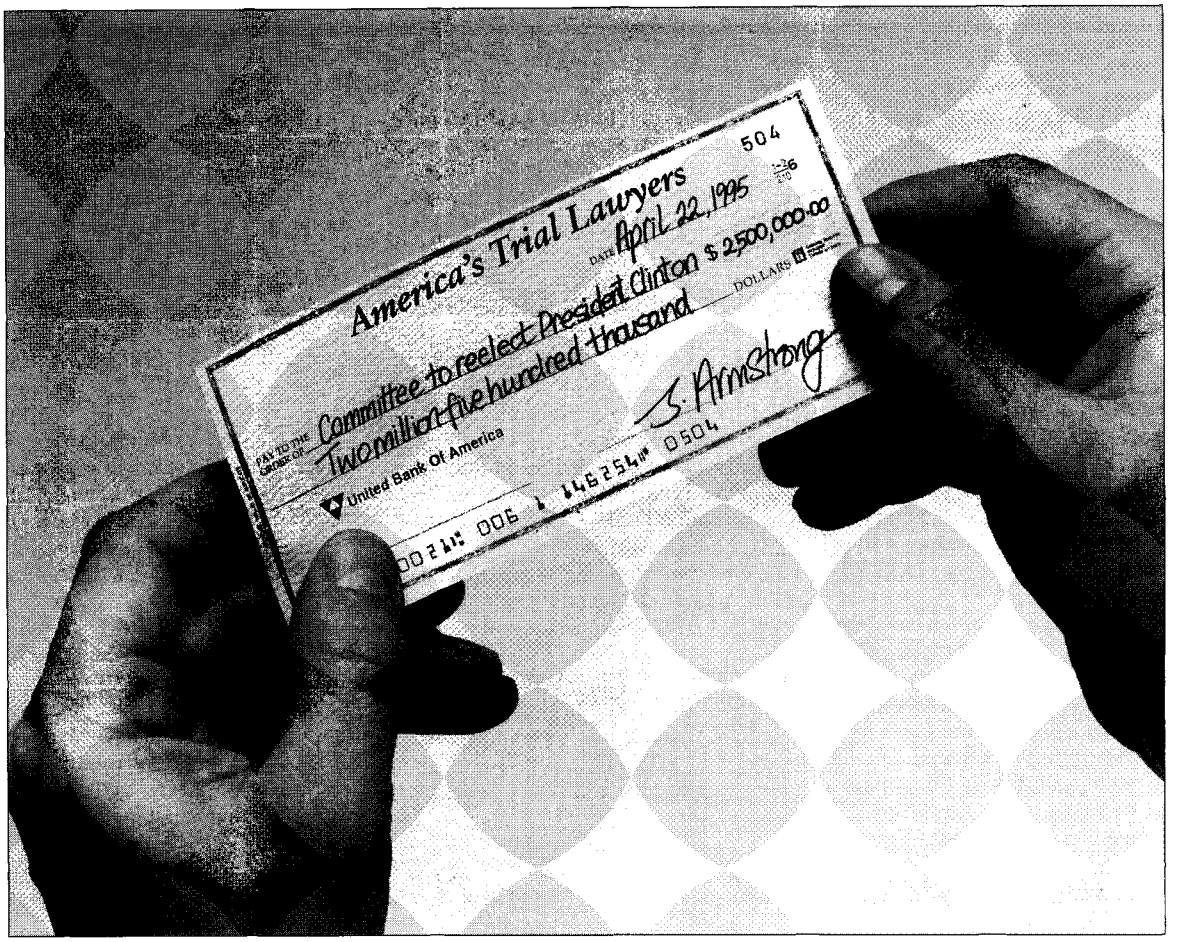

The President said he supported Federal product liability reform. Did he read something that made him change his mind?

Together, Republicans and Democrats have finally passed Federal product liability reform legislation. That's good for America, and especially for small businesses, because it means an end to frivolous lawsuits tying up our overburdened courts. It ensures corporate responsibility, while reducing the threat of legal action against manufacturers and product sellers, many of whom withhold or withdraw products from the market because of fear of lawsuits. In some cases, even life-saving medical innovations are not made available because the threat of litigation is so high.

As Governor of Arkansas, Bill Clinton supported Federal reform, a position he also took as President. But he's threatening to veto the reform legislation. Why does he see things differently now? Lawyers gave the President's re-election campaign $2.5 million in 1995, and trial lawyers are the biggest opponents of reform. Republicans and Democrats alike say the President has put this special interest ahead of the public interest.

When it comes to product liability reform legislation, the President let the American people think he was in the business of change. Now it seems it's business as usual.

CITIZENS FOR A SOUND ECONOMY
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Perot: Honest, and Not Nuts

Tucker Carlson asks, "Is He Honest?" (April 22) and "Is He Nuts?" (April 8), but the real question is, "Who's nuts?" What is considered common sense and patriotism throughout the country is looked upon as "not entirely sane" inside the capital.

Ross Perot might be thought insane by the egotistical, self-serving chattering class, but to the average, working American, Perot is a person with an inner strength who radiates conviction and integrity. He is a unique individual, a hero, a patriot, and a leader who gives of himself.

Perot sets his sights on bringing people into the political process where concerned voters can work together on economic and government reform. He is informing people on the issues.

Ross Perot gives us hope that we can have a better country if we pursue a vibrant vision for the future instead of the failed policies of the past. His voice, joined with millions of ours, says that we can restore ownership and rebuild America.

JOAN VINSON
ANNAPOLIS, MD

The Naked Public Cave

David Brooks's article on the spiking of Johnny Hart's comic strip "B.C." by the *Los Angeles Times* ("The Naked Public Cave," April 22) shows how those who preach "tolerance" and "diversity" often have little tolerance for diversity of viewpoint.

Specifically, if your viewpoint is not politically correct, in order to be "tolerant," you must not only listen to others' views but keep your mouth shut about your own.

Under the system of politically correct double standards, pro-Christian expressions of opinion are "exclusive" and "insensitive," while anti-Christian expressions must be tolerated.

Let's hope that the people in charge of the *Los Angeles Times* don't ever realize what the "C" in "B.C." stands for, or Hart might be forced to change the strip's name.

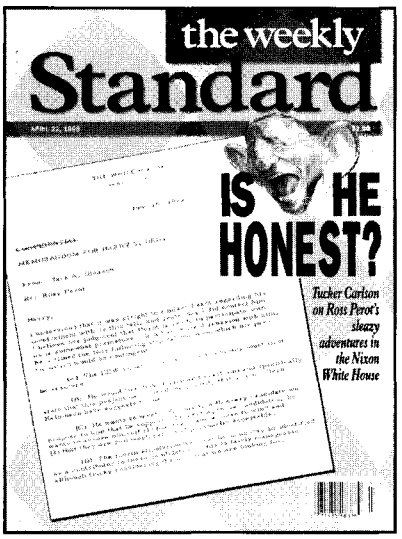
At least he can be comforted by the promise that his Lord will acknowledge before His Father those who have acknowledged Him before men (Matt. 10:32).

STEPHEN J. KALAFUT
GERMANTOWN, MD

Environmental Offense

Matthew Rees argues that Republicans "must shift the terms of the [environmental] debate, from Republican opposition to environmental protection to Republican support for effective regulations that aren't overly intrusive" ("GOP Zoo Revue," April 22).

Why not shift the terms of debate even more? Democrats aren't afraid to attack big business when it harms the environment; Republicans shouldn't be afraid to attack big government when it does the same.



Free-market environmental think tanks, such as the Competitive Enterprise Institute and the Political Economy Research Center, long have noted that farm subsidies encourage pesticide use, that the sugar tariff encourages overproduction in the Everglades, that federal ownership of land in the West encourages overgrazing, and that the Endangered Species Act encourages landowners to kill endangered species.

Republicans ought to go on the offensive, demanding to know why the White House supports the interests of big government over those of the environment.

Of course, such a strategy would require Republicans to wage a full-scale assault on corporate welfare (taking on big sugar, for instance), which they may or may not have the stomach to do. But the alternative—posing as merely kinder, gentler regulators—is a sure loser.

TIMOTHY LAMER
FALLS CHURCH, VA

Anyone who's watched *Larry King Live* knows that it is not a one-issue show, contrary to what Matthew Rees implies in his article about Republicans and the environment. In fact, Larry King dictates the flow and direction of conversation, and when outsiders are asked to host the show, as Newt Gingrich did on March 29, they must follow King's lead.

Therefore, for Rees to suggest that Gingrich squandered a real opportunity to plug the environmental consciousness of Republicans is naive. As the venue was crawling with animals, all that would have been needed to turn the show into a full-fledged circus was for Gingrich to transform himself into Al Gore.

Given the strong prevailing sentiments, environmental hour would only have been a political disaster for Gingrich and the Republicans. After all, Bill Clinton is the biggest political chameleon around.

This is an important election year for Republicans. Gingrich would be ill-advised to devote much media time to promoting such a peripheral issue as the environment, which Rees himself cites as "a GOP . . . political loser."

But rather, like a successful business that concentrates on its core products, the Republican party must emphasize issues that resonate well with the voters and represent the party's core values—deregulation, tax relief, welfare reform, school choice, and the like.

By not using the show to tout a Republican environmental record, Gingrich did little to worsen the misperceived image of Republicans as being "pro-pollution." Rather, he articulated without words the reality that there are issues far more deserving of our immediate attention than the environment.

NITA PAREKH
BALTIMORE, MD

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Correspondence

Clinton's Nauseating Grief

After reading Andrew Ferguson's article "The Interminable Grief of President Clinton" (April 22), I relived the nausea I felt while viewing Clinton on TV. This president is beyond contempt. The families of the "32 others" must be really angry—it's as though they are non-existent. If the voters of this country can't see through this charlatan, we are in big trouble.

NORA W. MURDOCH
FLAT ROCK, NC

Andrew Ferguson's piece was notable more for its callous display of cold Calvinism than for its insight into human nature. His remarks put me in mind of my northern, WASP relatives, who treat a death in the family as an annoying interruption of the weekly routine. Bill Clinton, however, is a southerner descended from Irishmen who may be a little more inclined towards an emotional response in such a situation.

I hold no brief for either the president or the late Ron Brown—in fact, as a conservative political commentator and columnist, I gleefully bashed their actions regularly. But I know that a sudden and violent death can unman even the most macho of us.

Ferguson finds it incredible that the president could be jovial at one moment, then switch to tears the next.

Ferguson may treat grief with "a measured, brief ceremony of sorrow and then silence." Let those of us who have felt loss more deeply continue to devote at least a few days to the memory of deceased family and friends.

DAVID STEWART GLASGOW, JR.
AUSTIN, TX

Hypocrisy of the *Times*

Bruce Bartlett's "Wages of the *Times*" (April 22) is a good article, but there is an even bigger story.

The *New York Times*'s April 5 editorial admits that as many as 100,000 low-wage jobs will be lost if the minimum wage is raised to $5.15 per hour. Just last month, however, the *Times* ran a series of articles decrying the downsizing of corporate America.

It is curious, to say the least, that the oh-so-caring *Times* finds the loss of 40,000 middle-management positions at AT&T so much worse than the loss of 100,000 entry-level jobs.

The fundamental disconnect that allows the *Times* to fret about corporate downsizing while actively encouraging the destruction of jobs for people who arguably need them more is absurd, and the *Times* should be called to the mat for it.

GREGORY CONKO
WASHINGTON, DC

Taking Children to Work

In response to Christina Hoff Sommers's article "Ms. Takes Out After Boys" (April 22), I would like to say that common sense does indeed exist, and it is where you would expect it, a good 600 miles from the nearest coastline.

At my place of employment, "Take Your Daughter to Work Day" has been broadened (pardon the pun) to "Take Your Children to Work Day." Employees may bring in a child of at least nine years of age deemed worthy of the experience.

The best part is that the experience is one that many children enjoy, and in a place where such common sense is pleasantly surprising: I work for an ABC-affiliated TV station in Indianapolis.

If anybody wants to turn this politically correct holiday into a positive experience, plan now to have next year's "Daughters' Day" be "Kids' Day." As the ad slogan goes, "Just do it."

W.K. AIKEN
INDIANAPOLIS, IN

Leave Freud to the Left

Thanks to Gwen Broude's "Freudian Quack-Up" (April 15) for pointing out how wrong Freud was, how modern understanding has superseded psychoanalysis, and how irrelevant it all is now. In that case, *Liebchen*, I wonder why we care so much. The recovered-memory movement is Freud's fault? Does this mean you blame Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker on Jeremiah and St. Paul?

Look, fulminations at Freud and psychoanalysis are the traditional franchise of the old/New Left (for reducing personal tension that could create revolutionary fervor, for reducing impulsive behavior that could be turned into "smashing the machine," for reinforcing family and work roles, etc.). Conservatives should respect tradition and let the Left keep its pet rocks.

TOM BLAU
FAIRFAX, VA

I'm No Reagan-Hater

About the nonsense that Marlin Fitzwater put together and you repeated in the Scrapbook concerning my alleged deep hostility "to the Reagan legacy and the man personally" ("Reagan-Hating at the Reagan Library," April 15): What kind of fools do you take the folks who run the Reagan Library to be that they would invite such an infidel to give the keynote address on "The Reagan Legacy" at the Reagan Library?

MIKE WALLACE
CBS NEWS/*60 MINUTES*
WASHINGTON, DC

Jokers Make Policy

In his article "Sacrilege in Our Time: The Imus Affair Explained" (April 8), Andrew Ferguson states, "Most administrations, in fact, keep a handful of professional joke writers on retainer."

Not only do they participate in speechwriting but they must also be helping with budget proposals and legislation.

M.G. REKOFF, JR.
BIRMINGHAM, AL

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The Princeton Economic Institute Proposal *for* tax reform & economic growth

1. Abolish the personal income tax; replace it with a 10-percent national retail sales tax.

Abolish the personal income tax and replace it with a 10-percent, national retail sales tax. The products and services not subject to that tax include basic rent on housing, non-prepared food, health care, and medicine. The purchase and sale of stocks, bonds, gold bullion or futures contracts, option or warrants will also be exempt. This will immediately reduce the cost of American labor by 25 percent within the U.S. economy. Furthermore a national retail sales tax will end the discrimination against American citizens, requiring all residents and visitors to pay their portion of the federal tax burden. According to the IRS, 17 percent of the economy is underground, contributing nothing toward the overall well being of the nation. Only a sales tax will capture that revenue.

2. Mandate a 15-percent raise.

Stipulate a 15-percent net increase in take-home pay for every wage earner. This will still result in a 10-percent reduction in the cost of American labor relative to current levels, thereby increasing American competitiveness.

3. Increase excise taxes.

A 10-percent increase in excise taxes including the gasoline tax should be implemented. Surveys have shown, after a retail sales tax, gasoline taxes are the best tolerated by the American public.

4. Implement a low, 2-percent national retail sales tax on real estate.

A national sales tax on real estate of two percent should be imposed. This will be split one percent for the buyer and one percent for the seller. This will apply to residential as well as commercial property. This will result in a drastic reduction from the current capital gains tax situation and eliminate the taxation of the elderly who have accumulated their savings in a large part within their home. This will enable the elderly to sell their home once the children have gone and use part of that equity for retirement by reinvesting in a smaller retirement facility. Currently, such persons are forced to borrow against their homes, which is more cost effective than selling their home subject to capital gains tax rules.

5. Flatten business income taxes.

All business operations, whether partnership, proprietorship, or corporation, will be subject to a flat, 15-percent business income tax. The only deductions from the net tax are research & development, charitable contributions, and $1,000 per employee to encourage job creation. Any business earning more than twice expenses (minus director or owner salaries, loans, transfers, dividends, or pension payments) will be subject to a flat, 25-percent income tax.

6. End all taxes on capital gains, gift and inheritance, and savings and dividends.

7. Repeal the 16th Amendment.

The repeal of the federal government's authority to impose an income tax on American citizens as authorized by the 16th Amendment. Based on previous Supreme Court rulings, business and corporations are still subject to income taxes; these changes do not apply to the states.

8. Make any tax increase expire after four years; subject any increase or continuance to a national referendum.

9. Take Social Security off budget.

Social Security must be taken off budget and allowed to become an honest trust fund where the capital contribution will be reinvested. The agency must be segregated, free from lobbying efforts on the part of the private sector as well as the public sector. The guiding principle must be economic security as implied by the name. No funds held by the Social Security system may be diverted in any way whatsoever by Congress, including restraint upon investment of such funds or mandatory investment in Federal government bonds. A maximum of 50 percent of all funds may be invested in either the private sector or government sector. The fund will be allowed to buy listed stocks with a capitalization in excess of $1 billion. Stocks must be U.S.-based operations only. Any bonds (private, state, local, or federal) must not be of an issue rated less than A+, of foreign origin, or of greater maturity than 10 years.

10. Incorporate a tax amnesty.

Phase I of tax reform includes a tax amnesty program. Anyone who has income that has remained unreported and is currently not in negotiation with the IRS, may come forward and pay a flat, 15-percent income tax without penalty or interest. Those funds will be earmarked to allow the independent establishment of the Social Security trust fund. This will provide the seed capital, allowing the new system to be as secure and honest as any private pension plan as prescribed by law.

11. Balance the budget.

A balanced budget target should be the ultimate goal and spending would be subject to mandatory across the board reduction if interest expenditures exceed 15 percent of total government expenditure, exclusive of Social Security.

Summary

The enactment of this proposal will broaden the tax base. It does not shift the tax base from capital and investment to the working middle class. The elimination of income tax and stable, predictable rates will attract offshore capital into the U.S. The net sum of these points will create the single greatest economic expansion in the history of the United States and perhaps the western world.

For more information, contact the Princeton Economic Institute.

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the weekly Standard

The Real Middle East

We welcome (albeit skeptically) Friday's Israel-Lebanon-Syria cease-fire agreement, the latest interruption in the chronic violence that is international politics in the real Middle East.

The real Middle East is where the bloody-minded Hafez Assad holds court in Damascus and apparently prefers an ongoing state of belligerence to any imaginable peace with Israel. It is where Iran arms guerrillas in Lebanon and finances terrorists in the West Bank committed to Israel's destruction. It is where U.S.-sponsored international conferences on terrorism don't deliver much in the way of security for the citizens of Jerusalem and Kiryat Shmoneh, who live in daily fear of exploding buses and falling Katyusha rockets. The real Middle East is, in short, a place where efforts to achieve that holy grail of American diplomacy, the "comprehensive peace," must sometimes be suspended—to give war a chance. And the real Middle East remains very different from Israeli prime minister Shimon Peres's sunny vision of a "New Middle East," full of warm economic and political partnerships between Arabs and Israelis.

WE SHOULD AVOID THE TEMPTATION TO SUBORDINATE AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY TO THE FANTASY OF A "COMPREHENSIVE PEACE."

It may be a bit ironic that the normally dovish Peres and the normally squeamish Clinton administration both arrived at the conclusion three weeks ago that it would be better to "war, war" than to "jaw, jaw" for a while. Of course, both had the same dubious goal in mind: getting Peres reelected on May 29 so that the quest for the "comprehensive peace" could continue without disruption. For the past few months, Israel, Peres, and the peace process itself had all become targets of a carefully orchestrated good-cop/bad-cop routine. Yasser Arafat made nice in his public statements from the West Bank while Hamas terrorists set off bombs in Jerusalem. As David Bar-Illan reports in the May issue of *Commentary*, and as longtime Arafat-watchers will no doubt be shocked to learn, the strategies of the Hamas terrorists and the PLO leader were complementary. (Indeed, Arafat's fulfillment last week of his promise to change the language in the Palestinian national covenant calling for the destruction of the state of Israel should be viewed in this light, not in the hazy glow of the "New Middle East.") With the world's attention drawn to the new complications in the peace process caused by the bus bombings, Syria's Assad seems to have felt himself ignored. And therefore he decided to turn up the heat in northern Israel by allowing hundreds of Iranian-supplied Katyusha rockets to flow into the hands of Hezbollah.

All these aggressive acts were merely a predictable reassertion of the Old Middle East rules of the game. They made a mockery of Peres's rosy optimism and of Secretary of State Warren Christopher's assiduous courtship of Assad. But at least the Clinton administration had the gumption to know when enough was enough. The decision to give Peres the green light and then provide diplomatic cover while the Israeli military punished the Iranian-backed Hezbollah guerrillas in Lebanon sent the right message to both friends and foes in the Middle East. As one Clinton official told the *Washington Post*, "We did not want to be criticizing Israel for responding to aggression funded and directed by Tehran with the assent of Syria. . . . We were going to give the Israelis some running room."

It's hard to remember a time in the last 20 years when the United States was more appropriately supportive of an Israeli military action. The record of the last two Republican administrations was, at best, mixed. When Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982 to drive out the PLO, for instance, Secretary of State Alexander Haig was encouraging but Caspar Weinberger and

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other Reagan administration officials would have been just as happy to cut Israel off from all U.S. support in order to appease angry Arab leaders. The Clinton administration, by contrast, was unembarrassed about supporting Israel even in the face of international criticism and over 100 civilian casualties. Unfortunately, it did inherit from its Republican predecessors an infatuation with the search for an elusive comprehensive peace and a corollary affection for the Labor party's willingness to subordinate everything else to that glorious cause.

The Bush administration treated the more stubborn Likud government of Yitzhak Shamir with a distaste bordering on hostility. (And so, by the way, did Bob Dole. When the Shamir government refused to go along with U.S. peace plans in 1990, Dole proposed cutting aid to Israel by 5 percent.) The Reagan and Bush administrations spent years hoping to undermine the Likud party and bring Labor to power, all in the name of the peace process.

The Clinton administration, with Republican holdover Dennis Ross calling the shots, has finally had the chance for which previous administrations yearned. But this has also been a source of weakness, because Clinton officials have been loath to let the historic opportunity of a Labor government slip through their fingers without making a try for the big prize.

Dennis Ross

Sean Delonas

The problem is that, despite their willingness to get tough, both Peres and the Clinton administration have been too mesmerized by the prospect of quickly garnering a peace agreement with Assad. This desire undermined the effectiveness of the Israeli offensive in Lebanon from the start. The aim of the military campaign was to force Assad to curtail Hezbollah's activities by squeezing Syria's quisling government in Beirut. But Peres was careful—too careful—not to cause very much direct damage to Assad's military position in Lebanon. In a calibrated use of force worthy of Robert McNamara at his worst, the idea was to push Assad just enough to get results in southern Lebanon but not too much to kill chances for a future negotiated agreement with Assad on the Golan Heights.

Then, as if to emphasize the fact of Assad's indispensability, Warren Christopher joined every other foreign minister in the developed world in flying to Damascus to seek Assad's help in ending the Lebanon crisis. Christopher's desperate visit proved that, especially in the wake of the tragic Israeli shelling of the Qana refugee camp, Assad was indeed exactly where he loved to be: holding all the keys to both near-term and long-term problems of the Middle East.

Even fervent worshipers at the shrine of the comprehensive peace—like Dennis Ross—ought to have known that giving Assad so much control over the future course of events was precisely the wrong tactic. Assad has always been least inflexible when he sees the world passing him by.

That is just one lesson from the Old Middle East that policymakers in both Washington and Jerusalem ought to keep in mind as they strive toward the Valhalla of the New Middle East. An even more important lesson concerns the primacy of the peace process and the constant quest for a comprehensive settlement.

No one ought to deny the gains that have been made, for Israel, for the United States, and for much of the Arab world, by the progress toward peace these past few years. But let's not forget that much of that progress was the result of events that had nothing to do with the search for peace. The Gulf War and the

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end of the Cold War did far more to shape the current Middle East balance of power than the shuttle diplomacy of James Baker and Warren Christopher. Syria's historic participation in the Madrid Conference five years ago was the result of the loss of its Soviet patron, not James Baker's cajolery. Jordan's compliance in recent years is the price King Hussein has had to pay to win back the goodwill of the Americans and the Saudis—and their money—after supporting Saddam Hussein in the Gulf War.

And the United States did more to help the peace process by smashing Saddam and presiding over the Soviet Union's downfall than it did by formulating any number of clever plans for bringing Arabs and Israelis together. If there is any chance for a New Middle East today, it is due in large part to the broad strategic shifts brought about by those two victories.

And therein lies a lesson for the future. Both Americans and Israelis should try to avoid the temptation to subordinate everything to the peace process. Instead, they should keep their eyes on the broader strategic questions that are likely to prove even more important to the long-term security and stability of the region.

Forget about whether or not President Assad is pleasant at a meeting. The containment of Iran, including pressure for a change of regime in Tehran; the isolation of Assad; the strengthening of the burgeoning strategic relationship between Israel and Turkey; the continued assertion of American power in the Gulf—all these will prove more important in the long run than squabbles over the Golan Heights. And steady pursuit of these strategic objectives may help keep a lid on the over-exuberance of our devoted negotiators and their fantasies of a "comprehensive peace." ♦

CASH AND KERRY

by Christopher Caldwell

Boston

OF ALL THE PLACES WHERE AL GORE could have celebrated Earth Day 1996, he chose a pier in Charlestown, Mass. The vice president came to explain to 200 Massachusetts mayors, hacks, and Americorps volunteers just why Sen. John Kerry is a national treasure. Gore boasted that a Kerry-supported EPA plan to reduce pollution in Boston Harbor is working—a plan originally slated to cost local taxpayers $1.3 billion for a network of tunnels and sluices. That pricetag not only spawned a protest group with the menacing name Stop This Outrageous Project Now but also gave Republican governor William Weld a juicy target in his effort to unseat Kerry this fall. And that sufficiently frightened the Democrats that Gore came to town to announce a compromise by which the harbor can be cleaned up for a billion dollars less.

"IF THE BATTLE IS BETWEEN WELD AND KERRY, WELD WINS," SAYS A BACKER. BUT IF IT'S BETWEEN DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS, KERRY WINS EASILY.

Weld, meanwhile, is the most popular Massachusetts politician in decades, elected with 71 percent of the vote in a state that is 13 percent Republican, and a darling of the national media—and he can't find a friend anywhere. Asked which national politicians Weld will call in to help his effort, campaign manager Virginia Buckingham replies, "None."

That's because Weld has described himself as an "ideological soul-mate" of Newt Gingrich. His tax cuts and absolute budget reductions (not cuts in the *rate* of increase) have been wildly popular. But Gingrich's person and policies are anathema (positives at 16 percent) in the Bay State. Weld has thus picked his issues carefully in the Senate race, taking Kerry to task on welfare, crime, and taxes, and leaving the Contract with America alone. Weld has also tried to link Kerry to Michael Dukakis, whose negatives remain over 50 percent six years after he left office. Kerry served two years as Dukakis's lieutenant governor.

Kerry is seeking to portray Weld as merely more ballast for the Republican juggernaut and has answered Weld's crime-welfare-taxes triumvirate with his own mantra of education and health care. These are top priorities for all liberal electorates, but in Massachusetts they also happen to be *industries*—the two biggest employers in the state. "If the battle is between Weld and Kerry, Weld wins," says a Weld backer. "If it's between Democrats and Republicans, Kerry wins it going away." Kerry holds a five-point lead in the polls.

Weld's strategy—to accentuate the personal—has

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three parts. First, he has won local Democratic endorsements, including several small-city mayors and Boston City Council president Jim Kelly. "These aren't Republican positions," says Weld of his welfare and crime initiatives. "They're simply what needs to be done." Second, on many issues, he's not allowing an inch of daylight between his own position and President Clinton's. Third, he has won Kerry's agreement to seven debates over the course of the campaign.

Kerry and Weld, Yale and Harvard grads respectively, showed an extraordinary command of detail in the first debate, held April 8 in Faneuil Hall. ("That's the sunset on the 1990 billion-dollar hike in the income tax, by any chance?" Weld riposted at one point.) The forensic masterpiece of the evening was Kerry's, after Weld asked if the senator could look into the eyes of a murdered policeman's mother, present in the audience, and tell her why he didn't favor the death penalty. Kerry pounced: "Yes, I've been opposed to the death penalty. I know something about killing. I don't like killing. . . . But, Governor, let me just tell you. Your use of the death penalty in this race is really kind of shameless, and I'll tell you why: There are only seven people on death row at the federal level." Kerry was thus able to (a) accuse Weld of exploiting tragedy, (b) remind voters that Kerry is a thrice-decorated Vietnam vet, while Weld succeeded in avoiding the draft, and (c) play the truth-teller by exposing as grandstanding the death-penalty provisions in the Clinton crime bill, which Kerry backed. Polls showed Kerry winning the first debate narrowly.

Nonetheless, Kerry is not yet sparking enthusiasm. Weld raised almost twice as much money as the senator in the first quarter of 1996. The candidates expect to need more than $10 million apiece, which would probably make the race the most expensive of the cycle and could lead Kerry to tap the $760 million fortune of his wife Teresa Heinz, widow of catsup heir and Republican senator John Heinz. The Massachusetts GOP claims it's illegal for Kerry to use it, given that the marriage took place after Kerry had begun raising money for the campaign. Kerry claims his campaign began with the *announcement* of his candidacy and that the money can be used should he so desire.

Heinz thus far has been the great wit of the race, informing viewers before the first debate that she would do anything she could to help a husband who had endured "12 years of celibacy," a dig at Kerry's

Kent Lemon

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prodigious amatory reputation since his separation in 1983 (he was divorced in 1988). Heinz has Republican connections that go beyond her late husband's circle: She received an award from the liberal-Republican Ripon Society, on whose advisory board she sits, in 1994. (Weld's wife, meanwhile, is a sometime Democrat, the first cousin of the governor's 1994 election opponent, Mark Roosevelt.)

Kerry is a pure, party-line liberal Democrat. "You can't go back and find any votes in John's record that he'd be ashamed of or have a hard time explaining," says his longtime lead consultant, John Marttila. That is, Kerry will try to turn his own lockstep liberalism into an advantage by calling attention to the *complexity* of Weld's ideology.

A WELD WIN WILL EMBOLDEN THOSE WHO FAVOR REMOVING THE ABORTION PLANK FROM THE REPUBLICAN PLATFORM.

That ideology is indeed hard to describe. Weld's positions on abortion and homosexuality have put him at odds with Republicans nationwide and have led some to call him a "libertarian." That's wrong. Weld is a syncretist, a right-winger on fiscal and crime issues and a hard leftist on matters of sexual lifestyle.

This leads Weld into contradictions in areas where criminal status and protected status sit on opposite sides of a very thin line. Take abortion: Like Kerry, Weld has backed President Clinton's veto of the ban on partial-birth abortions, yet Massachusetts under Weld has one of the most stringent domestic-violence laws in the country. So the woman who aborts a viable fetus in the last days of pregnancy is simply exercising her protected right of choice; the woman who slaps her baby around just days later can face a stiff jail sentence.

Or homosexuality: Weld championed one of the most far-reaching gay-rights bills in the country. Yet on April 22, Weld's bill to track sex-offenders on their release from prison passed the Massachusetts House. The result is that if you make a pass at a boy on his eighteenth birthday, the state will jail anyone who refuses to rent you an apartment or give you a job on that account. If you make a pass at a boy who's a day younger, society will hunt you to the ends of the earth, with all its wrath and firepower, and brand you a permanent pariah once you're caught. No one in American political life, with the possible exception of William J. Bennett, has been keener to use the technology of the information age to keep citizens under surveillance.

Such maneuvering may be necessary for a Republican to maintain power in Massachusetts. But a soaring vision of individual liberty it is not.

A Weld win will embolden those who favor removing the abortion plank from the national platform to argue that, when Republicans take social issues off the table, Democrats have nothing to discuss. A loss will lead cultural conservatives to stress the indispensability of social issues in splitting the Democrats. Working against Weld are two big factors: first, the popularity of Bill Clinton, who could take 70 percent of the vote in Massachusetts against a weak Bob Dole and provide Kerry with formidable coattails; second, Weld's own popularity. "If the Kerry people are smart, they'll try a bit of jujitsu," says a close Weld adviser. "Cast the race not as Weld versus Kerry but as keeping Weld in the State House versus losing him to Washington." It could work. Weld's "conservative" revolution got its foot in the door through Dukakis's mismanagement. But its staying power has come from Weld's force of personality alone—a combination of high energy and patrician aplomb that has insulated him from criticism for six years. Without Weld, that revolution can't continue. Weld's policies are good reason for Democrats to vote for Kerry. They may be reason enough for Republicans to vote for Kerry as well. ♦

THE POLITICS OF PREENING

by Matt Labash

"THE POLITICS OF MEANING"—it's a movement whose time has come. And gone. Shhhh! Don't tell that to the 1,800 or so devotees who recently packed Washington's Omni Shoreham Hotel for the Summit on Ethics and Meaning.

It's been three years now since Hillary Rodham Clinton gave voice to Michael Lerner's portentous little neologism, which was laughed out of the public arena shortly thereafter. But Lerner, editor of the Jewish bimonthly *Tikkun* (Hebrew for "to heal"), has aged and cured it. He has expanded an ephemeral

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thought into an ephemeral book titled *The Politics of Meaning*, not to mention a nonprofit foundation and a full-bore cult—at least to judge from the looks of the apostolic throng pressing around him like he's about to multiply their loaves and fishes.

The first time around, "POM" (as it's called by progressive hipsters) was problematic because no one was quite sure what it meant. And it's still hard to find a succinct distillation. "A utopian vision of what is possible . . . a new paradigm for politics . . . to build a society that encourages mutual recognition, caring, ethical and spiritual sensitivity, and ecologically attuned social practices" are but a few of Lerner's attempts to define his invention.

His followers' efforts are just as elusive, as one Gordian-haired buttercup in a Metallica hat explained: "Our goal is to change perspectives globally. We're trying to change all the s— that's going on now in all the people's f— up heads."

Some may say it's limp-wristed politics. Others might charge it's de-fanged religion, because of POM's association with groups like the Reconstructionist Jews and Unitarian Universalists who've managed to deemphasize some of the bothersome aspects of traditional theocratic patriarchal structures—like God, for instance.

But for this assemblage in any case, Lerner is their Moses (if Moses wore rumpled gray poly-blends and had a three-inch spread between his tie and belt buckle). And Meaning is their Canaan—they're not quite sure what it is, but they just need to get there.

There are a number of ways one goes about conducting a meaningful summit. First, one attends candle-lit plenaries, singing along to "My Compañero," or just listening to bad Pete Seeger knock-offs (although Seeger, bad enough in his own incarnation, was also present).

Then one breaks down into task forces. There was the Families and Relationships task force—which hammered out language for the blindingly original "Covenant With American Families" to include same-gender marriage and other "alternative family forms." Then there was the Cynicism in Media task force, where participants resolved to foster understanding with media types by "adopting a reporter" (I had no takers).

One also attends Meaningful meetings, like "Men and the Politics of Meaning"—which, despite its macho connotations, was refreshingly free of robust, athletic types. Instead there were a lot of Birkenquirks wearing clogs—a disproportionate number of men in open-toed shoes.

Whenever someone new entered the room and introduced himself, we yelled back his name to "create a welcome space." And then we formed a group circle, many of us with our feet hiked up Indian-style, where we gave our names and one word revealing the struggle about men and Meaning: "Jeff-Touch," "Ted-Confusion," "James-Sexuality," and so forth.

"The struggle" is about rejiggering archetypes, specifically the destructive warrior archetype, or so we were told by one chubster with anemic mutton chops fresh from his Gender Studies class. "It's about replacing Patton with Gandhi, Clint Eastwood with Thoreau—who are just as strong and powerful," he said.

"It's so important to take yourself seriously," said Carmelita Madison, who wasn't a man at all but whose advice was widely

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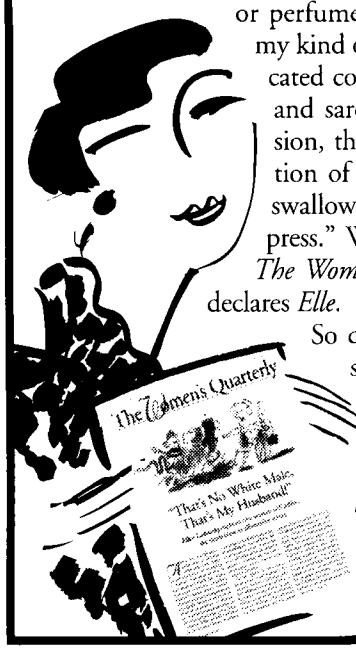

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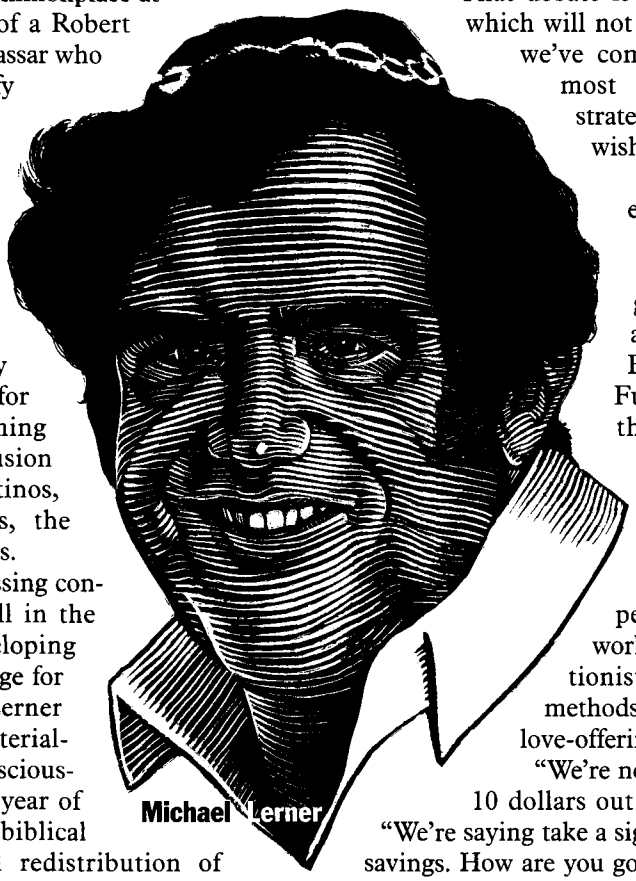
adhered to. "It's about me coming alive, just to live my damn little life, okay?"

"Okay," we said in unison.

Bold declarations were commonplace at the summit, such as those of a Robert Downey, Jr. lookalike from Vassar who warned of the need to diversify "the movement" to include minorities and youth. "Students need a place at the table," he said. "But we're not looking for salmon and dessert. We're hungry for change, and that would truly be delicious." True to form at any progressive event, the need for diversity trumped everything else. Other pleas for inclusion were made on behalf of Latinos, the elderly, transgenderists, the incarcerated—even Canadians.

But Lerner has more pressing concerns. His movement is still in the embryonic stage of developing ideas. Or at least new language for some very old ones. Lerner bemoaned the "ethos of materialism," corporate "rip-off consciousness," and used the Jewish year of Jubilee as a misinterpreted biblical precedent for the "radical redistribution of wealth." During Q&A, a clergyman with the Revolutionary Communist party suggested the overthrow of capitalism, to be replaced with "something very liberating, which we think is communism."


Michael Lerner

"On that we are agnostic," said Lerner. "That debate is the language of the past which will not change anything. . . . But we've come up with probably the most effective anti-capitalist strategy that you could possibly wish for."

Which is not to say Lerner is immune to good old-fashioned greenback charm. He is, in fact, dangerously close to a very old archetype himself, what we Baptists call the Fleecing Fundamentalist. The pass-the-plate-Sister-Margaret-and-dig-till-your-cuticles-bleed spiel practiced by powder-blue, blow-dried snakeoil salesmen on hayseed independent TV stations is worlds away from Reconstructionist Judaism. But Lerner's methods are no more subtle during love-offering time.

"We're not suggesting that you take 10 dollars out of your pocket," he said. "We're saying take a significant check out of your savings. How are you going to retire, what are you going to have for the future? *This* is the potential future." ♦

THE HOYA! THE HOYA!

by Mark Gauvreau Judge

FOR A SHORT TIME LAST YEAR, I was sure I was going to become an English professor. I had landed a job in the English department at Georgetown University, a job that offered free tuition. With the financial barriers to a Ph.D. eliminated, I was free to fulfill a lifelong dream. I would act on 20 years of Catholic schooling and become a teacher, dedicating my life to turning mush-heads into thinkers.

Then I met Professor Christy (not his real name). He was an English professor whose ponytail, round spectacles, and jeans-and-blazer outfit made him appear a walking cliché of the post-60s campus radical. But he was actually a different kind of rebel. He taught a course on Milton and considered *Paradise Lost* the greatest verse ever committed to paper. Christy was at war, not with the Dead White European Males of the patriarchy, but with the tyrannical claptrap that is political correctness.

Often, I would see him shuffle into the department like a man headed for the gallows, his face a mask of despair. "They've just killed Milton," he would moan. "They're taking away Shakespeare."

"They" are the radicals who have conquered the Georgetown English department. On campuses across the country, the story is a common one: Holdovers from the 60s reach positions of power in the university and begin to jettison the classics in favor of decon-

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structionism, theory, and literature lacking merit but boasting political cachet. At Georgetown, English majors were once required to study Shakespeare, Milton, and Chaucer, works from Old Middle English, the Renaissance, and the Restoration, and American literature. But starting this fall, they will have a triad of categories to choose from: Literature and Literary Theory; Studies in Culture and Performance; and Studies in Writing: Rhetoric, Genre, and Form.

It will work as follows: Literature and Literary Theory will be the last bastion of the Dead White Males; Studies in Writing will explore deconstructionism and other academic fads; and Studies in Culture and Performance will, as one professor told a campus newspaper, "include the study of anything that aids in the construction or representation of cultural values like race, gender, and sexuality." (Professor Christy incurred the wrath of the department when he offered to teach a course on *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. His colleagues thought it a fine idea until he broke it to them that he had been joking.)

The intellectual collapse at Georgetown has been well documented in the media. Both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* covered the curriculum change, and Maureen Dowd and Coleman McCarthy wrote columns about it. But no account could capture the demoralizing feeling of witnessing the effects of political correctness firsthand. It's one thing to hear that radicals have destroyed the study of classic literature; it's another actually to see students demeaned for their conservative ethical views and to be forced to spend hours a day copying tripe. I saw course descriptions requiring students to read comic books and watch the feminist film *Thelma and Louise*, and academic papers proclaiming that all courses not named "Women's Studies" or "African-American (or other) Studies" are "men's studies . . . white-defined, ethnocentric, and implicitly racist." I was once scolded by a professor when I refused to agree that using the passive voice—as in, "I think Nicole Brown Simpson was killed by O.J. Simpson"—is a patriarchal way of "feminizing" the object, thus making Nicole Simpson guilty of the crime of being murdered.

IT'S ONE THING TO HEAR THAT RADICALS HAVE DESTROYED THE STUDY OF CLASSIC LITERATURE; IT'S ANOTHER ACTUALLY TO SEE IT.

As a believer in the intellectual tradition of Catholic education, I find all of this heartbreaking. I spent my high-school years at Georgetown Prep, the Jesuit school that is considered a baby brother to Georgetown. Until the late 19th century, when the Catholic church separated its secondary schools from its colleges, Georgetown Prep and Georgetown University were a single institution. Both had grown out of Bohemia Manor, founded in Maryland by Jesuits in the 1740s and, according to *Catholic Schools and the Common Good*, "the first Catholic school to take root and endure within the original English colonies." Bohemia Manor, Georgetown Prep, and the university endured in large part because of the Ratio Studiorum, the Jesuits' formal plan of study, which emphasized literature, Latin, Greek, grammar, rhetoric, philosophy, science, and mathematics.

Such topics still form the core of a Georgetown Prep education, and they account for why a Prep graduate continues to enter college and the adult world with the kind of knowledge that places him miles ahead of other students.

This does not mean that we were trained to be rubber stamps. Nor do we deny that authors and artists are products of their times and cultures—a favorite charge against conservatives. We simply acknowledge that some people have revealed the mysteries of science or written the English language with a genius unsurpassed, and it makes logical sense, if students strive to become learned and thoughtful, to demand that they study the best.

At Georgetown University, exploring Newton or reading Tacitus in the original is considered not merely quaint but an exercise in oppression. "The master's tools cannot dismantle the master's house," goes one leftist quotation that a class of freshmen was asked to absorb. In other words, don't immerse yourself in the best of what has been thought and said, even if doing so—as in the case of Frederick Douglass, who studied Augustan rhetoric in order to argue for the abolition of slavery—can bring eloquent voice to your personal concerns. You have to reject the "patriarchal paradigms" and settle into your own little cocoon of victimization, whatever it may be.

Eventually, I decided to leave my job at the university to take up journalism again. One day before I left, Professor Christy wandered into the department, clutching student papers and appearing more flustered and despondent than usual. "These kids are dummies," he hissed, getting close so no one could hear him. "Dummies." Not much dumber than the teaching they receive.

Mark Gauvreau Judge is a journalist whose last contribution to* THE WEEKLY STANDARD *was "No Alternative" (Jan. 15).

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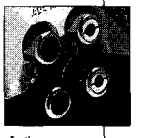

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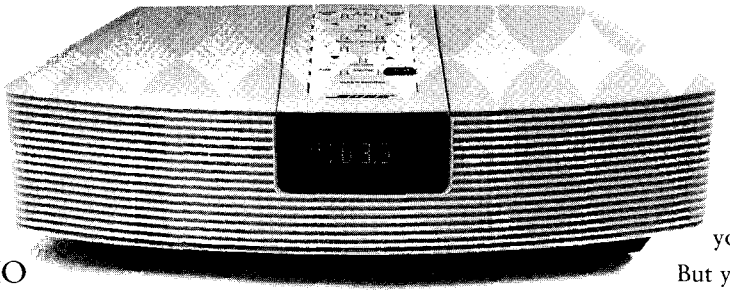

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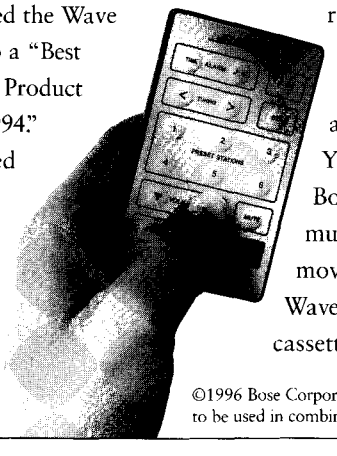

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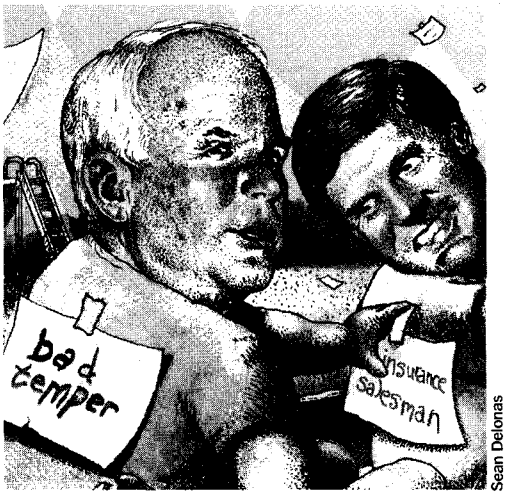
VEEPSTAKES: A DIRTY, BLOODY BATTLE

By Fred Barnes

The problem with a Republican ticket of Bob Dole and Michigan governor John Engler is the image it projects, says a close associate of Ohio governor George Voinovich. "What's the picture? Two thugs." Engler partisans give as good as they get. "The one thing the Republicans who've sniped at Engler have in common," says Engler strategist Michael Murphy, "is they've raised taxes." Meanwhile, GOP consultant Jay Smith, a pal of Sen. John McCain of Arizona, dismisses Engler and Voinovich as featherweights: "If you pick a garden-variety running mate like one of those Midwest governors—I don't mean to denigrate anybody—you lose."



Sean Delonas

The rule of thumb that you don't campaign for the vice presidency has been violated beyond repair this year. At least a half-dozen prominent Republicans are running to be Dole's choice. And several are running hard, dispatching allies to talk them up and snipe at rivals. Of course, no one admits to such a breathless quest, or to engaging in negative tactics. Former South Carolina governor Carroll Campbell "is not campaigning to be vice president as some others are," harrumphs Campbell adviser Bob Rusbuldt. Nor is Engler "running for it," claims Murphy. McCain has this to say about the phenomenon: "Some of those not running are sending out their résumés." As for himself, perish the thought: "I'm not interested and don't want it."

What's striking about the vice-presidential race is how public it is—and how nasty. Voinovich adviser Greg Stevens produced a 12-minute video touting Voinovich and sent it to 1,500 folks in the political community, including Dole. California attorney general Dan Lungren held a reception in Washington. Engler, exploiting his perch as president of the Republican Governors' Association, has flooded Washington with press releases ("RGA Chairman Governor Engler Praises Dole For Taking On Judicial Activism") and a glossy brochure.

The new rule for vice-presidential politics is this: It's not enough to play up your attributes—you must destroy your rivals. The trashing is usually left to aides, but Illinois governor Jim Edgar actually did it himself. "I don't know how, particularly, John Engler finds the time he spends—an inordinate time to me—in Washington," Edgar told Richard L. Berke of the *New York Times*. "Apparently, you can do that. I just haven't been able to figure out how to do that. Nor do I really want to do that." Edgar's criticism was unusual. More characteristic was the sly mention to me by one candidate's adviser of two unfavorable stories about Voinovich in Ohio newspapers. The adviser was only too happy to send them along, plus two others that won't be found in Voinovich's press kit.

Why has the quest for the vice presidency become such a full-blown affair? Three reasons. First, Dole wrapped up the Republican presidential nomination in early March, leaving little else for politicians and the press to dwell on until the conventions in August. "What else is there to talk about?" asks Stevens, the Voinovich partisan. Second, there's a plethora of Republicans actively interested in being picked by Dole, and each needs to differentiate himself from the pack. And every candidate has a cluster of political consultants and advisers in his orbit ready to extol their principal and denigrate the others. "The veepstakes is a diversion for people with a lot of time on their hands," says Murphy.

The person who transformed the vice-presidential selection process is not Dole or any of the hopefuls, but Stevens. Early this year, he took footage from a

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1990 interview with Voinovich and his wife, Janet, spliced it together with news film, and produced a video called "Governor George Voinovich—Working Harder, Working Smarter." Then last winter he sent a copy to every governor, member of Congress, and important Republican, as well as scores of political reporters. To pay for it, Stevens used funds from Voinovich's burgeoning war chest for a Senate race in 1998 against Democrat John Glenn.

Voinovich supposedly has instructed aides not to promote him for the vice presidency. Stevens says he "acted in violation of that." Still, Voinovich loved the video. "He's still talking about it," says Stevens. And it's no wonder. It casts him as a conservative who not only rescued Cleveland from bankruptcy and despair when he was mayor in the 1980s, but also has saved Ohio taxpayers $4 billion. Despite Voinovich's putative orders, Stevens continues to distribute the video and push the governor for vice president.

So does Sen. Mike DeWine of Ohio, who is not likely to be acting without Voinovich's full knowledge. "We've never elected a Republican president without Ohio," argues DeWine, "and I think Voinovich brings Ohio. The last poll showed Voinovich adding three points [to Dole] in Ohio. That makes the difference. The race will be within three points."

DeWine takes the high road, declining to attack Voinovich's competition. Stevens isn't so finicky, eagerly zinging the other contenders. Engler? "He's not as good a message-deliverer as George Voinovich." Campbell? "He's problematic because of his recent job" as head of the American Council of Life Insurance, a Washington-based trade and lobbying group.

But it was the video that stirred the other candidates in the top tier—Engler, McCain, Campbell—into action. Naturally, they denounced it (while probably wishing they had put one out first). "We've got a record, so we don't need a video or other gimmicky devices," sneers Murphy, Engler's man. And, Murphy asks rhetorically, "do they have the pro-affirmative-action, pro-gun-control, and tax-increase stuff in it?" For the record, the answer is no.

"Carroll Campbell is not going to be producing any Hollywood video on why he should be vice president," says Campbell adviser Rusbuldt. Besides, only a small group of people will decide who winds up as Dole's veep, says McCain-ite Jay Smith, and they already know Voinovich: "They don't need a video."

Engler has had more than a video bedeviling him. Because of his numerous and highly visible trips to Washington, his TV appearances, and the public-relations offensive by his allies, Engler had emerged by early April as the front-runner for the vice presidency. Or at least, he was the media-anointed front-runner. This brought a new level of scrutiny for which Engler was not prepared. The *Detroit Free Press* submitted a list of 20 questions about his personal life, which included: "Have you ever been in a fistfight?" Rumors about his draft status during the Vietnam war got into the press. Columnist Mark Shields hammered him for not serving in Vietnam. The *Washington Times* wrote about his divorce in 1987. (Engler remarried in 1990 and his wife recently had triplets.)

To cope, Engler had to establish what is, in effect, a campaign organization. His gubernatorial press secretary, John Truscott, would handle policy questions. Dan Pero, fresh from running Lamar Alexander's presidential bid, would handle queries about personal matters like the divorce. Pero, now managing Michigander Jim Nicholson's senatorial bid, is doing this as an unpaid volunteer. He ran Engler's two successful gubernatorial campaigns and also introduced Engler to his wife. Aides were sent to examine Engler's draft record to make sure his story stood up—"pro-active checking," Murphy calls it. All they found was a "chronology" of his physicals and changes in draft status. He was categorized 1-Y for being slightly overweight.

Soon Engler's plummeting prospects began to pick up again, partly because of a windfall. His former wife, Colleen, who now works for the International Republican Institute in Washington, saw a story about the divorce in the *Free Press* and called the reporter who wrote it. The result? "Cross off one potential obstacle to the unofficial and unacknowledged bid by Gov. John Engler for the Republican vice presidential nomination—a vindictive ex-spouse," wrote reporter Dawson Bell. Colleen House was quoted as saying she was no longer bitter about the divorce and had voted twice for Engler for governor. Had Engler been unfaithful, as she had suggested in divorce papers? "That's a question that only John can answer," she said. "But does it matter to me now? Of course not."

Engler's strongest ally in Washington, Sen. Spencer Abraham of Michigan, happens to be Dole's favorite GOP freshman. But Abraham hasn't intervened with Dole on Engler's behalf yet, nor has DeWine for Voinovich. Abraham is, however, happy to make the case to everyone else. Engler as veep would do three good things, he says. He'd bring Michigan, a swing state. He'd go after Democrats with incredible zeal. And he'd give the ticket the ability to argue that Republican ideas on growth and opportunity, which have succeeded in Michigan, are bound to work nationally. Joblessness, for example, has been lower than the national average in Michigan for 27 straight months.

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The McCain candidacy has a completely different basis: He's a war hero and Vietnam POW with whom Dole is strikingly comfortable. Since McCain was national chairman of Phil Gramm's presidential campaign, his close tie to Dole is a bit surprising. But moments after he agreed in 1994 to back Gramm, McCain rushed to Dole's office to promise never to say an unkind word about him. He kept his promise. Now, McCain aides also insist—and hope Dole and his senior advisers will be convinced—that McCain consistently advised Gramm to attack Patrick Buchanan, not Dole. He also is a defender of Sheila Burke, the chief of Dole's Senate staff who often angers conservatives. "I've never known Sheila Burke to do anything that wasn't at the direction of Bob Dole or in his interest," McCain says.

If any Republican or reporter hasn't heard of how McCain and Dole bonded during the debate last December over sending troops to Bosnia, McCain's allies will quickly inform him. And it's a compelling story. McCain backed Dole's decision to support President Clinton and the deployment of 20,000 soldiers. That helped give Dole political cover. When Dole spoke on the floor, McCain sat in front of him in the parliamentarian's section. Decades ago, Dole said, "I was wearing a John McCain bracelet proudly, a POW bracelet, and arguing with my Democratic colleagues not to cut off funding for the Vietnam war." He sought "to derail those who would cut off funding while John McCain was in a little box over there in prison." McCain was moved. Later, he sat in the front row when Dole debated presidential contenders in South Carolina (this was after Gramm dropped out), grinning whenever Dole looked his way in hopes of cheering him up.

Sean Delonas

Given his history, McCain doesn't draw as much criticism as other veep contenders. "Arizona's not a swing state," says Murphy, downgrading McCain's value to Dole. But, Murphy adds, "there's a lot of respect for him in the Dole campaign. He's an impressive guy."

Carroll Campbell gets tougher treatment. "What," asks Jay Smith, "does he bring? I don't know." Murphy argues that Republicans are "going to win South Carolina anyway. And Carroll Campbell, God bless him, doesn't have legs in Tennessee."

But, like McCain, Campbell has a Dole card to play. His role was critical in Dole's breakthrough victory in the South Carolina primary in March. "Dole people will tell you the savior of their campaign was Carroll Campbell," says Bob Rusbuldt, who runs Campbell's political action committee, Victory America. That's not quite what Dole people say, but they are grateful to Campbell. He also recruited a number of governors to the Dole campaign.

Campbell allies read from a single set of talking points when they discuss the vice presidency. Sure, South Carolina is a safe Republican state, but Campbell brings the entire South, where Dole is shaky today. "You can cherry-pick Michigan," says Rusbuldt. "You can cherry-pick Ohio. Campbell brings you a whole region." He's the second choice of people who have another candidate. He's pro-life but not offensive to pro-choice people. But won't his job as a Washington lobbyist detract? "That might be a one-day story, max," Rusbuldt says. There's a final item about Campbell that's not in the talking points: President Clinton fears him. "They think a southern moderate is what people want," says ex-George Bush operative Mary Matalin, who ought to know. She's married to James Carville, Clinton's political adviser.

Just below the top tier are three other potential running mates for Dole—Edgar of Illinois, Lungren of California, and Wisconsin governor Tommy Thompson. You can tell they're part of the campaign because other candidates or their handlers take swipes at them. Murphy says Lungren is "actively campaigning while denying it." Worse, "nobody's heard of him." Stevens says Lungren wouldn't guarantee Dole carries California; after all, Lungren is only the state's attorney general, not its governor. When Jay Smith, the McCain advocate, ran into Lungren in Long Beach, California, in mid-April, he addressed him as "Mr. Vice President." Lungren "loved it," says Smith.

In truth, Lungren has no illusions about being Dole's pick, though it was Dole last year who initially mentioned him as a possibility. But this was done to jab California governor Pete Wilson, who was challenging Dole for the presidential nomination. Now, House speaker Newt Gingrich talks

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up Lungren, a Catholic and a conservative.

There's only one person all the vice-presidential camps agree would be a powerhouse partner for Dole, and that's Colin Powell. Backing him is safe because he's not running, now anyway. Matalin says he won't "unless he wants a divorce." Dole needs to name a running mate who will make voters say, "Mmmmm, that's pretty interesting," says Jay Smith, and he believes Powell would do that. DeWine, who backs Voinovich, says only Powell "changes the dynamics of the race in every state, including Ohio, overnight." McCain says attracting Powell is still possible. It probably is. But my guess is if Powell takes even a small step toward running, he'll face exactly what the other veep candidates have: more criticism than he's ever experienced before. ♦

THE TRAGEDY OF SID: STATUS-INCOME DISEQUILIBRIUM

By David Brooks

The editor had triumphed. All through a long New York spring evening, it had been John Updike this and Norman Mailer that. He'd kept his tablemates at the Freedom Forum's annual Free Expression Dinner in a state of conversational bliss, and when the meal was over everybody at his table was in such high spirits they decided to go down to the lounge for a few drinks. The Regency Hotel has a little room called The Library, where the martinis are $11. The editor was joined by an investment banker from Morgan Stanley and a lawyer from Wachtel Lipton and his wife. And he was just as amusing in the bar, filling the night with publishing tales. Feeling expansive, he decided to pick up the tab, putting it on his expense account, and when the whole group stumbled outside to the corner of 61st Street and Park Avenue, he was seized by his high spirits and called out, "Does anybody want to share a cab?"

The lawyer looked uncomfortably at his wife. "Actually, we're walking distance, just up on 65th," he said, motioning up Park. The investment banker said she lived just a block and a half away, toward 5th Avenue.

The editor decided not to splurge on a cab after all. He caught a cross-town bus at 57th Street and then waited nervously near the token booth for the number 1 subway train at Columbus Circle. A foul-smelling homeless person shouted something at him until the train finally came, taking him up to 103rd Street and Broadway. He walked over to his apartment building, which had a check-cashing place downstairs and a storefront operation offering low phone rates to El Salvador. The elevator (with a bare lightbulb flickering overhead) took him upstairs to his scratched steel door. He opened it and was in his dining room. The people who live on Park and Madison have foyers, foyers so long you're tired by the time you reach the living room. But the editor couldn't afford an apartment with a foyer. He stepped over the threshold and found himself looking across his cluttered table into the kitchen and wondering where he'd left the cockroach spray. Suddenly he was feeling miserable.

Our editor, a composite, was suffering from Status-Income Disequilibrium (SID). The sufferers of this malady have jobs that give them high status but low income. They lunch on an expense account at The Palm, but dine at home on macaroni. All day long the phone-message slips pile up on their desks—calls from famous people seeking favors—but at night they realize the tub needs scrubbing, so it's down on the hands and knees with the Ajax. At work they are aristocrats, Kings of the Meritocracy, schmoozing with Felix Rohatyn. At home they are peasants, wondering if they can really afford to have orange juice every morning.

Status-Income-Disequilibrium sufferers include journalists at important media outlets, editors at publishing houses, TV news producers, foundation officers, museum curators, moderately successful classical-music performers, White House aides, military brass, politicians who aren't independently wealthy, and many others. Consider the plight of the army general, who can command the movements of 100,000 men during the week but stretches to afford a Honda

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Accord for weekend outings. Or of poor John Sununu, who ruled the world when he was White House chief of staff but had to feed, educate, and house eight children on $125,000 a year. The disparity is not to be borne.

There are two sides to the status-income equation. On one end is the Monied Class, those with plenty of dough who can use it to acquire status. But I am concerned with the Titled Class. Historically, when we think of the Grand Titles, we think of Prince, Duke, Earl, and Baron. But in the age of meritocracy, the Grand Titles are Senior Fellow, Editor in Chief, Assistant to the Secretary. Or titles that include an employer's name—the *New York Times*, the White House, Knopf—in which case it scarcely matters which position the individual holds.

The Titled Class has always resented and secretly envied the Monied Class. But for journalists, writers, and politicos, the pain now is acute. Until recently, a person who went into, say, the media understood that he or she would forever live a middle-class life. But now one need only look at Cokie Roberts or David Gergen to see that vast wealth is possible. Once it becomes plausible to imagine yourself pulling in $800,000 a year, the lack of that money begins to hurt.

IN THE AGE OF MERITOCRACY, THE GRAND TITLES ARE SENIOR FELLOW, EDITOR IN CHIEF, AND ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY.

Furthermore, the rich used to be remote. An investment banker went to Andover and Princeton, and a radio producer went to Central High and Rutgers. But in the new media age, the radio producer also went to Andover and Princeton. The schlumps she wouldn't even talk to in gym class are bond traders on Wall Street with summer houses in East Hampton. The student who graduated from Harvard *cum laude* makes $85,000 as a *New York Times* reporter covering the movie business. The loser who flunked out of Harvard because he spent all his time watching TV makes $1.2 million selling a single movie script.

Consider the situation of our composite editor. He's earning $110,000 a year as a top editor at, say, *Time* magazine. His wife, whom he met while they were studying at the Yale drama school, is a program officer at a boutique foundation that offers scholarships to Brooklyn high-school students. She makes $65,000. In their wildest imagining they never dreamed they'd someday pull in $175,000 a year.

Or that they'd be so poor. Their daughter turned 10 last year and needed a separate bedroom from her brother. They were lucky to get a fairly bright three-bedroom for $2,750 a month, even allowing for the dingy neighborhood and the cockroach-infested building. Jessica's tuition at Dalton is about $18,000, once you throw in the extras, and it costs at least $16,000 to send Max to the Ethical Culture School. The parking spot for the 1988 Camry is $275 a month, the part-time nanny who picks up Max from school costs about $12,000 a year (off-the-books cash; there goes any chance of serving as Attorney General), and after throwing in the costs of various ballet (Max) and rock-climbing (Jessica) lessons, the family is left with an after-tax disposable income for food, laundry, subway tokens, clothes, and leisure of about $600 a month. Which explains why the editor hasn't bought a new tie in three years and why he wakes up at 4 in the morning wondering where next year's tuitions are going to come from. It explains why he can't face his accountant, who knows that out of his $175,000 annual income, he gave a grand total of $450 to charity.

Members of the Titled Class are good at worrying about their reputations. All their lives they've mastered the art of having other people think them smart and wonderful. But the person who suffers from Status-Income Disequilibrium can scarcely spare an hour worrying about his reputation because he has to spend all his time worrying about money (when in fact all he wants from money is to have enough so he doesn't have to worry about it).

And it is not as if the Titleholder these days fills his mind with thoughts about truth and beauty, or poetic evocations of Spring. It is not as if he is compensated for his meager $110,000 salary with the knowledge that he can spend his days amidst the Higher Things. If he's in publishing, say, he spends his days thinking about market niches, the same thing those summer-house-owning executives at AT&T think about. When a book comes in, he wonders first which market it will serve: the Jewish market, the gay market, the depressed women's market? If every day he could publish a memoir by a neurotic lesbian Holocaust survivor with her own syndicated radio program, he'd have his own imprint in a year.

And it's not as if he is less ambitious than the partners at Skadden Arps, or that he does less schmoozing than the muni-bond traders at Kidder Peabody. The media person is in business just like $600,000-a-year smoothies in Fortune 500 executive suites. It's just that they are working in big-money industries

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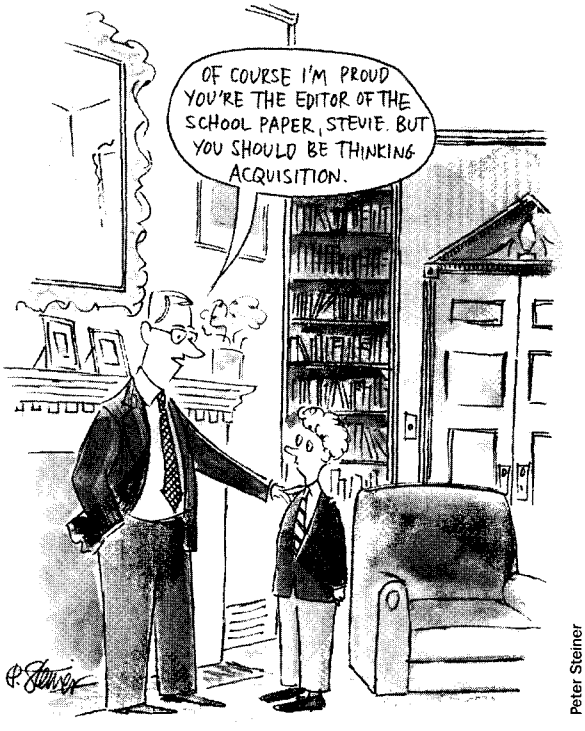
and he's in a small-money industry.

The Titleholder is at the tail end of the upper class. Our composite editor is rich enough to send his kids to Dalton and Ethical Culture, but all the other parents make as much in a month as he makes in a year. When his wife wasn't working, she used to pick up Jessica from Dalton. She'd wait outside on the sidewalk, she and 150 nannies. She'd try to arrange play dates with the other kids, but their nannies weren't willing to travel all the way uptown to 103rd Street, so they'd end up going to the playgrounds off Central Park West. And she'd sit, a little uncomfortably, with the nannies on the benches that ring the playgrounds, trying to find common conversational ground. If a Martian were to land in a Manhattan playground, he would conclude that human beings are white as children and grow up to be black with Trinidadian accents.



Peter Steiner

Eventually, the kids of a SID sufferer begin to notice the income difference between their family and all their classmates' families. It happens around birthday time. The other kids in the class have birthday parties at Yankee Stadium (they've rented out a skybox) or at FAO Schwartz (they rented out the whole store for a Sunday morning). The SID kid has his party in his living room, with a picture of a donkey on the wall and a 69-cent blindfold you can peek through if you really want to.

Often, the child of a SID victim will get invited for play dates by classmates who live in the Dakota or on Central Park South, big, high-ceilinged places with servants' wings and dining rooms the size of tennis courts. These are the apartments of those who live in the forest canopy, where everything is light and clear and odorless and most of all uncluttered. People who live in the canopy enjoy wide-open spaces. Their apartments are filled with long expanses of counter space, wall space, settee space, table space, and floor space, all of it luxuriously spare. And it's just the same in their offices. People in the Monied Class have big offices and luxurious wood surfaces. And they have secretaries to route the paper flow, and their secretaries have secretaries to file things away, so there is nothing left stacked up to cover the wide-open expanse of a Monied person's desk. The briefcases of the Monied Class are wafer thin, with barely enough space to squeeze in a legal pad—because their lives are so totally in control they don't have to schlep things around. They can travel luggage-free to London because, after all, they've got another wardrobe waiting for them in the flat there.

The life of a SID sufferer, by contrast, is cluttered. He's got a little cubicle at his newspaper or magazine, or a little office at his publishing house or his foundation. And there are papers everywhere: manuscripts, memos, yellowed newspapers, magazine clippings. And at home, the kitchen of the SID sufferer has jars and coffeemakers jamming the available counter space, and pots hanging loosely from a rack on the wall. The SID sufferer has books jammed all around the living room, some dating back from college (*The Marx-Engels Reader*), and there are magazines and frayed copies of the *New York Review of Books* lying on the bedstands.

The contrast is clear when it comes time for the annual class dinner. One pair of parents take it upon themselves to throw a dinner for all of the other parents of the kids in their daughter's second-grade class. The host parents are inevitably executives at Goldman Sachs or CFOs at some media conglomerate. The affair is catered (Little Dorothy Caterers—with the slogan "We're not in Kansas anymore"). And everybody else gets to come admire a dining-room table that can seat 26.

When a Titleholder with a household income of $175,000 a year enters a room filled with Monied persons who earn $1.75 million a year, a few social rules will be observed. First, everyone will act as if money does not exist. Everyone, including the Titled person near bankruptcy, will pretend it is possible to jet off to

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Paris for a weekend and the only barrier is finding the time. Everyone will praise the Marais district, and it will not be mentioned that the Monied person has an apartment in the Marais, while the Titled person stayed in a one-star hotel somewhere in the suburbs. The Titled person will notice that the Monied Class spends a lot of time planning and talking about vacations, whereas all the Titled person wants to talk about is work.

These conversations between those who are Titled and those with Money are fraught with peril. For example, a person who has made $10 million in the garbage-collection business has to defer in conversation to an editor at *Esquire*. On the other hand, an editor at *Esquire* has to defer to a person who has made $300 million in the garbage-collection business. A TV producer who went to Yale and Oxford is higher than an apartment-building owner who went to SUNY-Binghamton but lower than the owner of a hot restaurant who went to Brooklyn Community College. You've got to be sensitive to the invisible social hierarchies.

Peter Steiner

And at the back of the Titled person's mind there is the doubt: Do they really like me, or am I just another form of servant, one who provides amusement or publicity instead of making the beds? The sad fact is, the rich tend not to think this way. The millionaires think it would be neat to be a think-tank fellow and appear on the *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*. Look at Mortimer Zuckerman, who owns the *New York Daily News*, the *Atlantic*, *U.S. News & World Report*, and a goodly chunk of Manhattan. He'll drive out to Fort Lee, New Jersey, so he can do a taping for the cable channel CNBC. It's not enough to have more money than most countries. He wants to be a pundit.

I don't know about Zuckerman, but most people in the Monied Class who fantasize about becoming a public intellectual can't actually fathom what it would be like to make less than $300,000 a year. They, like everybody else, suffer from Bracket Amnesia. As soon as you reach one income bracket, you forget what life is like in the lower brackets (in the way women forget about the pain of childbirth). The Monied know that the middle classes can't afford any dress they fancy, or ski when they please, but this knowledge is an abstraction.

Still, the rich feel a lack. First of all, they have to pay for all the foundation dinners they attend, while the Titled people go free. The rich are the johns of the foundation dinner-party circuit. Second, the Titled people are, in effect, paid to be interesting. They are paid to read and think and come up with interesting things to say (it's astonishing that so many do this job so badly). And the rich feel vulnerable because despite their vast resources they still rely on the publicity machine for their good reputations, which these professional dinner-party ironists control.

For their part, members of the Titled Class react in diverse ways to the pressures of Status-Income Disequilibrium. Some try to pass for members of the Monied Class. First, they dress the part. They buy those blue shirts with white collars and, to go with them, bright paisley ties that make it seem like the wearer has 100 electrified sperm crawling up his chest. Or, if women, they'll scrounge together enough dough for a Chanel suit. They keep their shoes polished daily, so that the sheen almost matches that of their hard briefcases. They buy glasses with large-ish frames, in contrast to the tiny "artsy" frames of the rest of their media friends. In this way, they believe, they can walk into a society restaurant like Mortimer's and nobody will think they are just a bunch of editors trying to pass as moguls.

And they use their expense account to the max. Like an asthma sufferer taking the cure at an Arizona resort, a SID sufferer can find temporary relief from his affliction while traveling on business. He can stay at the Ritz-Carlton for $370 a night, with phones and televisions in every room in his suite. Hotel dry-cleaning will be as nothing; a room-service omelet will

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arrive every morning at 7:30 sharp. He will rent a Mercedes, or hire a car and driver, and for once he will be able to slide through life like one of the elite, in the clean, elegant world he so richly deserves.

But then the business trip ends and it is back to earth.

Which explains why other members of the Titled Class go the other way and aggressively demonstrate that they reject the luxuries the Monied Class enjoy. You will see them wearing Timberland boots with their suits, a signal that they haven't joined the Money culture. Their taste in ties and socks will tend toward the ironic; you might see them wearing a tie adorned with the logo of a local sanitation department, a garbage truck driving over a rainbow.

At home this sort of SID sufferer will luxuriate in his poverty. He will congratulate himself for the fact that he lives in an integrated neighborhood, though he couldn't afford the pearly-white neighborhoods along Park Avenue. He'll note proudly that he is in touch with normal Americans, since he, unlike all the elites he works with, still cleans his own dishes, still scrubs his own toilet. (In fact, the distinction between normal Americans and SID sufferers is that it never occurs to the former to congratulate themselves on their populism every time they do the dishes.) Most of all, he will congratulate himself on choosing a profession that doesn't offer the big financial rewards, for his decision not to devote his life to money grubbing. He does not mention to himself that in fact he lacks the quantitative skills it takes to be, say, an investment banker, and he is unable to focus on things that bore him, the way lawyers can. There never was any great opportunity to go into a more lucrative field.

THE MILLIONAIRES THINK IT WOULD BE NEAT TO BE A THINK-TANK FELLOW AND APPEAR ON *THE NEWSHOUR WITH JIM LEHRER.*

How can we alleviate the suffering of those who suffer from Status-Income Disequilibrium? For SID sufferers who are politicians or leading public officials, the answer is LEEP, the Lifetime Earnings Equalization Plan. The big lobbying firms, which hire politicians and top officials when they retire, could simply begin paying the politicians a decade or two before they actually go to work for the firms. That is, instead of making $125,000 a year for 20 years in public life and then $1.1 million for 10 years in private industry, the public figure would have his income equalized at $600,000 a year for the entire 30-year period.

For journalists, media types, and other SID sufferers, there is no easy solution at hand. One can envision the rare high-income/high-status people—William F. Buckley, Martin Peretz, Lewis Lapham—getting together to form charitable organizations to benefit their deprived brethren. These organizations could give out prestigious awards to low-status billionaires. Or they could give six-bedroom homes to high-status/low-income types.

But the needs are so great, I fear that only the federal government has sufficient resources to address them. In most cities, people are perpetually $1,500 a month away from happiness. Whatever their income, they imagine that an extra $1,500 a month would give them everything they need. But in New York, Washington, and Los Angeles, where SID is found in its greatest concentrations, people are $250,000 a year away from happiness. It will take a lot of money to bring these people's incomes into line with their status. Only the federal government has that kind of money.

Under the federal plan I envision, anybody who could prove that five of his reasonably close friends earned seven times more than he, would be eligible for federal aid. This aid would not come in the form of a cash grant. Under a cash program, some SID sufferers would lose the work ethic and simply try to scrape by on the federally provided $250,000 a year. But a targeted in-kind benefit—mortgage stamps—would have the right effect. The government would send out monthly mortgage stamps to pay the cost of any newly bought home valued at more than $1.1 million. The recipient would still be responsible for paying tuition costs, ski- trip costs, wardrobe costs, and other essentials. He would preserve his high-status career, but he would not feel ashamed when he returned home at night.

Ultimately, such a program would benefit the entire nation. Because SID sufferers control the American media, government, and the terms of civic discourse, their anxieties dominate the national culture. Their bad mood depresses everybody. If they were richer, the entire country would feel better about itself. And this would have a positive impact on the lives of American children everywhere. This would once again be a country in which little boys and girls could dream of becoming the literary editor at *Elle* and still be secure in the knowledge that they will be able to do their work from a six-bedroom apartment overlooking Central Park. ♦

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Under a Thatched Roof, With Warren Christopher

By Charles Krauthammer

What exactly were the Fijians doing there? Everyone knows about the Israeli shells that landed on the Fijian U.N. post in south Lebanon, hitting a crowd of refugees and killing over a hundred. And while the press was relentless in probing the reasons why Hezbollah was there, why the refugees were there, and why Israeli artillery ended up there—the three deadly ingredients that led to this awful tragedy—no one bothered to ask what the Fijians were doing there.

These Fijians, so very far from home, are part of a United Nations troop deployment that occurred not this year, not during the 1993 fighting, not during the raging battles between Israel and Hezbollah in the mid-1980s, not after Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, but as a result of a campaign so remote most Middle East experts cannot remember it: Menachem Begin's 1978 incursion into Lebanon to halt PLO attacks into Israel.

At the time, the U.N. exercised its reflex of expressing "grave concern" over Israel's act of self-defense and moved as swiftly as it could to undo it. It ordered Israel out and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in. The interim has turned out to be 18 years and counting. UNIFIL's mandate, according to the U.N., was "to confirm the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon, to restore international peace and security and to assist the Government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its effective authority in the area."

It has accomplished none of the above. Indeed, like the U.N. presence in Bosnia, also established out of mindless good intentions, UNIFIL has proved worse than useless. First, U.N. personnel loose in a war zone provide hostages for murderers: Canadian and other U.N. soldiers chained to fences by Serbs during NATO bombing runs; U.S. colonel William Higgins kidnapped, then cold-bloodedly hanged by Hezbollah in Lebanon. Moreover, U.N. forces in a war zone provide false refuge for refugees: thousands deliberately slaughtered in the grotesquely named "safe haven" of Srebrenica; one hundred accidentally murdered in the thatched-roof refuge of the Fijian camp in south Lebanon.

Yes, thatched roof, the farce amid the tragedy. Most of the refugees were huddled in a recreation building covered with thatch—not the best protection against artillery (and, as it turned out, terribly flammable). What on earth are thatched roofs doing in a war zone? The Fijians had built them to remind themselves of their island home so far away.

II

The U.N. presence in south Lebanon has absolutely no purpose. It does not protect. It does not keep the peace even in those rare times when there is peace in the area. That is kept by the balance of power between Israel and Syria and mutual deterrence between Israel and Hezbollah.

Nonetheless, the U.N. maintains a presence that is not trivial. UNIFIL has 169 (!) bases manned 24 hours a day by over 4,500 troops. Nor are these supposed to be merely binocular-toting observers with a side arm or two, like the observer force in Sinai. These are well-armed troops. They are supposed to be doing something.

What exactly were they doing during this round of fighting in south Lebanon? Taking cover. Their job is to cower during artillery barrages and to look the other way when Hezbollah violates cease-fire agreements with Israel.

It took long enough for the press to notice that the Israeli attack which killed the refugees at the Fijian camp had been provoked by Hezbollah rocket fire from 300 yards away. But no one asked the question: What are well-armed U.N. troops doing allowing guerrillas to fire rockets from within yards of a U.N. camp? After all, the U.N. itself says that each UNIFIL post "is assigned responsibility for ensuring that hostile activities are not undertaken from the area surrounding it." If they cannot keep the general peace, they are at least supposed to keep the local peace.

The Fijians episode is only the most recent demonstration of the uselessness of the U.N.'s acting on its own as peacemaker. The most dramatic and tragic demonstration of this truth occurred not in Lebanon, nor even Bosnia, but Rwanda, from which the U.N. withdrew last April after ignominiously

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standing by while the worst mass murder since World War II occurred right before its eyes.

These operations are a direct consequence of the grandiosity of a U.N. apparatus that refuses to acknowledge its unsuitability to any kind of active warfare, its dearth of military expertise, its abject lack of independence, and its fractured command and troop structure. It is a disgrace that these forces are deployed around the world in places where they do more harm than good.

An expensive disgrace. It costs the U.N. about $130 million a year to keep UNIFIL going. It has cost more than $2.5 billion since 1978. Why not withdraw the troops and give the money directly to war victims on both sides of the Israel-Lebanon frontier for reconstruction and compensation? And let the good Fijians go home.

III

There is only one other aspect of the current Lebanon affair that can rival Fijians in Lebanon for its farcical qualities. And that is Christopher in Damascus. Self-effacement in private citizens is a virtue. It may even be desirable in a presidential envoy sent (as Warren Christopher was by then-president Jimmy Carter) to negotiate a ransom for American diplomats held hostage in Iran, a national humiliation that Christopher, in his one published oeuvre, deemed a model of diplomatic success. But self-effacement in a secretary of state representing the greatest power on the globe in the face of humiliation by a bankrupt, isolated, friendless third-rate power like Syria is an embarrassment.

The United States enjoys its status as negotiator, mediator, and arbitrator in the Middle East not because the people of the region like it but because they fear it. They fear it because the Soviet Union is gone. They fear it because they saw what America did in 46 days to Iraq. Warren Christopher is a man almost designed by nature to abolish that fear, indeed to replace it with disdain.

What else can Hafez al-Assad, dictator of Syria, feel for a man who has come courting him in Damascus not once, not twice, but, as of this writing, 22 times? Of a man who meets rebuff without complaint—a grimace, if really pushed—and is always back for more? Assad's contempt for Christopher is such that during the latest peace shuttle he made Christopher wait two hours while Assad ostentatiously entertained Russia's foreign minister. As usual, Christopher took the insult with grace.

Having swallowed that humiliation, could Christopher have been surprised when two days later Assad upped the ante? Christopher flew in from Jerusalem, motored to the presidential palace for a meeting with Assad, only to be told that the meeting was canceled. It seems Assad had a prior dinner engagement with Benazir Bhutto! Graceful as ever, Christopher and his retinue returned for the night to Jerusalem—then back to Damascus the next morning when Assad could fit him in. Christopher took the slap with aplomb. His aides explained that compared with peace, "Assad's scheduling" is hardly important.

Indeed Christopher has allowed nothing—certainly not self-respect, let alone respect for American authority in the region—to stand in the way of his ever-receding pursuit of peace between Israel and Syria. His flattery, inflation, and propitiation of Assad deserves its own chapter in the history of diplomatic mindlessness. And leads ultimately, if tortuously, to the tragedy of the latest fighting in Lebanon.

IV

Israel has never had any designs on Lebanese territory. At those times in its history when it could have had for the taking as much Lebanese territory as it wanted—1967, for instance, when it defeated and captured territory from Syria, Jordan, and Egypt, all with powerful armies—Israel fired not a shell into, nor took an inch of land from, defenseless Lebanon. Why not? For the simple reason that, at the time, Lebanon was on friendly terms with Israel and posed no security threat to its northern border.

The only time Israel has actually intervened in Lebanon was when forces outside the control of the Lebanese government—first the PLO, then Hezbollah—seized territory in south Lebanon and used it to launch attacks on northern Israel. Hence, the 10-kilometer-deep Israeli "security zone" originally established by Begin in 1978. It has ever since remained more or less intact through every Israeli administration, hawk or dove. No government can leave its borders and civilians undefended.

Security is the reason, the only reason, Israel is in Lebanon. Dominion is the reason Syria is there. Syria has 35,000 troops occupying the country, dictating its politics, controlling it destiny. Why? There is no why. Syria simply considers itself the rightful hegemon of the area. It considers Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine part of the orbit of Greater Syria. Lebanon, being defenseless, was ripe for the taking. Syria took.

It was said during the Soviet period that Czecho-

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slovakia was so peace-loving a country that it did not even interfere in its *own* internal affairs. So too with Lebanon. Assad rules Beirut. Lebanese politicians are puppets. Those who resist, like Bashir Gemayel, have a way of becoming quite dead.

Syria not only covets Lebanon; it uses south Lebanon to obtain territorial concessions elsewhere, namely the Golan Heights held by Israel. Syria cannot attack Israel directly because that would provoke a general war Syria would lose. Instead, it uses Hezbollah as its proxy.

After occupying Lebanon in the late 1980s, Syria disarmed every militia in the Lebanese civil war, save Hezbollah. Hezbollah's constant attacks on Israeli soldiers and sporadic Katyusha fire into Israel's northern towns causing civilian death, damage, and general disruption are Syria's equivalent of Egypt's 1969-70 war of attrition against Israel. This ability to bleed Israel gives Syria a powerful bargaining chip in negotiations in which it would otherwise be in a position of great relative weakness.

The astonishing thing about Syria's perfectly transparent strategy is that it is so totally glossed over by the United States. We know that Hezbollah is kept well armed with supplies coming directly from Tehran through Damascus and then by truck to Hezbollah camps in the Bekaa Valley and south Lebanon. Indeed, 400 Katyushas were shipped from Iran through Damascus into the hands of Hezbollah while the latest fighting was raging.

The U.S. government (indeed, the Israeli government too) knew that Assad was actually feeding Hezbollah the rockets that were raining down on Israel. It did not protest. It did not even publicly announce the fact. That might embarrass or, worse, anger Assad, and that would surely get in the way of appeasing him.

The beginning of appeasement is treating the warmaker as peacemaker. America does, and the world follows. For his warmaking in Lebanon, Assad enjoyed on April 21 a diplomatic prize other dictators only dream of: On this one day, the foreign ministers of Italy, Spain, Ireland, France, Iran, Russia, and the United States found themselves all in Damascus vying for an audience with Assad. Indeed, the diplomatic gridlock got so bad that the prime minister of Pakistan had to briefly postpone her state visit for fear, I suppose, that her limo would find no place to park at the presidential palace.

Syria plays this war/peace game and America plays along. Assad unleashes Hezbollah, watches serenely as Israel bleeds and Lebanese die, then waits to see what the grandees of the world, led by the American secretary of state, will offer him to call it off. At week's end, he found out. For the Israel-Hezbollah cease-fire, brokered Friday by Christopher, Syria got (1) resumption of Israel-Syria negotiations over Golan (suspended after four suicide bombings in Israel last month), (2) formal recognition of a Syrian role in south Lebanon, (3) general appreciation for Syrian cooperation, and (4) not a word of criticism from anyone for starting this whole affair. Not bad for 16 days of arms-length mayhem.

Assad is a man of sticks and carrots. For three years, Christopher has come bearing nothing but carrots. What possible incentive can Assad have *not* to periodically turn south Lebanon into a killing ground?

The Clinton administration hopes against all evidence that treating Assad with honor will induce him to moderation. It has lavished more attention on and offered more inducements to him than any other administration ever. "I've spent 15 years in therapy," Woody Allen once said. "One more year and I'm going to Lourdes." Warren Christopher has been 22 times to Damascus. Once more and perhaps he'll try Woody's therapist.

V

And what has he gotten for his pains? A Syria which knows that any provocation will elicit, at worst, yet another visit from this relentless man. The ultimate travesty was the administration's inviting Syria to the anti-terrorism summit last month in Egypt. Syria is on the State Department's list of terrorist states. It houses the leading terrorist organizations of the Middle East. Indeed, it hosts the headquarters of the very Hamas terrorists that carried out the suicide bombings that provoked the anti-terrorism conference in the first place!

The administration's propitiation of Assad is a moral disgrace that might conceivably be justified if it yielded results. The result has been the encouragement of a tyrant who sees his every cynical manipulation earn him not just immunity but the favorable attention of the United States.

What is most odd about the administration's attention is that Syria needs the U.S. far more than the U.S. needs Syria. If there must be a supplicant in this relationship, it should be Syria. Syria is a country deeply in need, and the U.S. is the only country that can help.

It is important to understand the depths of Syria's isolation. It is well known that Syria has been strategically orphaned by the loss of the Soviet Union. Less well known is Syria's isolation in two other respects: geographic and ideological.

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Syria is surrounded on all sides (except for its Lebanese colony) by adversaries or enemies. There is Israel, with which it is still in a state of war; Jordan, which broke with Syria by virtue of its own full-fledged entry into the Israel-U.S. orbit; Iraq, whose hostility toward Syria is such that Assad held his nose to join the U.S.-led Gulf War coalition against it; and, least noted, Turkey, which just three weeks ago acknowledged the establishment of a military cooperation agreement with Israel involving Israeli use of Turkish air space and bases. (Turkey is driven in its hostility to Syria in part by Syria's housing, arming, and protecting the PKK—Kurdish guerrillas who operate against Turkey from Syrian bases, just as Hezbollah operates against Israel from Syrian-protected bases in Lebanon.)

Assad is, moreover, isolated ideologically. He is a dinosaur, the last of the Arab nationalists. In the early decades of Arab independence from Western colonialism, Arab nationalism—a mixture of watered-down socialism, native authoritarianism, anti-Westernism, and pan-Arabism—was the rage. Its exemplar was Egypt's Nasser. Its star began to dim with Nasser's ignominious defeat in the 1967 war. Its near-extinction occurred when Saddam Hussein, another prototype of the radical Arab nationalist, was routed in the Gulf War of 1991.

The ideological successors to Arab nationalism are two: Islamic fundamentalism (Hezbollah, Hamas, the Algerian rebels, Egypt's Moslem Brotherhood) and the more westward-looking, moderate authoritarianism exemplified by Mubarak of Egypt and Hussein of Jordan. Assad rejects both Westernization and Islamicization. He is the last of the pan-Arab nationalists. So much so that his only allies are non-Arab Iran (generally loathed throughout the Arab Middle East) and other partners of convenience, like Hezbollah and Hamas and the various terrorist groups that he houses in Damascus.

And beyond geographic and ideological isolation, Syria is economically bankrupt. It needs Western investment. It needs Western military modernization of its rusting Soviet inventory. It needs good diplomatic relations with the West. For all that, it needs the American connection. That is the great leverage we have over him—leverage that this administration has systematically squandered.

VI

What to do?

(1) *Disillusion.* The beginning of wisdom is disengagement from the fantasy of Assad's peaceful intentions. Assad is the most successful Machiavelli the Middle East has seen in 30 years. He is Saddam Hussein with brains, King Hussein with Scuds. Before he came to power, Syria had suffered 15 coups in its 25 years since independence. And he came to power 26 years ago.

He says he has made "a strategic choice" for peace, and President Clinton during *his* visit to Damascus (1994) declared that he buys it. On what evidence? In return for the entire Golan Heights, Assad has offered Israel essentially nothing: a cold peace, which is precisely what Israel *already* has—by virtue of its massive deterrent power—while *retaining* the Golan.

Assad's vague "peace" gestures should be treated for what they are: vague gestures. American policy toward him should be dictated by his actions. These include (a) rebuff of the most conciliatory Israeli regime ever, (b) rejection of Israeli offers for full return of the Golan, (c) fomenting of war in Lebanon, and (d) extraordinary displays of contempt for American interests, to say nothing of American authority, in the region.

(2) *"Peace process" agnosticism.* While recognizing that there will not be total peace in the Middle East without Syria, we must not be led to the illusory pursuit of a peace that is not there. If Israel wants to trade the Golan for some kind of paper peace with Syria, the U.S. should not stand in the way. Allies should be free to seek whatever path they believe might lead to peace. But the United States should neither urge nor pressure Israel into giving Assad the Golan. The U.S. can live with an Israel-Syria peace treaty, and it can—as it has for 50 years—live without one. We should let Assad know that his conduct has led us to this new policy of "peace process" neutrality and only a change in his conduct will induce us to change ours.

(3) *Rogue-state hardball.* Accordingly, we should begin treating Syria like the rogue state that it is. Warren Christopher's State Department declares Syria a terrorist state. He conveniently suspends that determination on the assumption that Syria has made a strategic choice for peace. It has not. Syrian warmaking in south Lebanon, support of terrorism, and intransigence in peace negotiations have given the lie to the illusion. The suspension of disbelief and the consequent indulgence of Syrian behavior must therefore cease. Syria should be subject to the same economic and diplomatic quarantine that its fellow terrorist-list brethren—North Korea, Cuba, Libya, Iran, Iraq, and Sudan—have earned from the United States.

Changes in Syrian behavior will bring changes in American policy. Nothing less. No more carrots. ♦

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Could He Be Our Dickens?

By J. Bottum

It's such a small thing the American novelist Oscar Hijuelos has done: just a little twist in the narrative structure of the novel of recollection, too technical on its face to be of much interest to any but the most determined scholar. But with it, Hijuelos—author of last year's *Mr. Ives' Christmas* and the 1990 Pulitzer prize-winner *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love*—has completely subverted the contemporary novel of recollection. He has taken modern literature's favorite device for denying that any moral self stands at the center of a story, and turned it inside out. Oscar Hijuelos has made the most new-fangled sort of novel assert the most old-fashioned sort of moral truth.

To read his four books is to feel a mad exhilaration utterly at odds with their nostalgic, elegiac tone. Who else writing today could do what Hijuelos does in *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love*, presenting Lucille Ball's husband, Desi Arnaz, as Aristotle's great-souled man? More to the point, who else writing in America today still believes in the possibility of great-souled men, or has a literary technique that could do more than mock or demean them?

The repeated nods toward Charles Dickens in *Mr. Ives' Christmas* (HarperCollins, 248 pages, $23) are more than merely homage to the greatest of Christmas storytellers. Hijuelos represents our best chance in these late times to have a Dickens, to have a novelist who is both very popular and very good—in short, to have a *classic* novelist among us.

Born in 1951 in New York City to parents recently arrived from Cuba, Hijuelos typically sets his work in the Upper West Side neighborhoods in which he was raised. After graduation from City College, he worked for an advertising agency in Manhattan while writing his first novel, the 1984 *Our House in the Last World* (still in print, like all the other novels). The story of the Santinios, a family of immigrants from Cuba's Oriente Province to New York in the 1940s, *Our House in the Last World* won the prestigious Rome Prize of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and received widespread, flattering reviews.

The very things that led to its critical recognition, however, are also the reasons *Our House in the Last World* is at last flawed, recognizable in retrospect as apprentice work (though of a high order). Hijuelos's main themes were in place even in this first effort: deep nostalgia for the lost world of his parents' pre-Castro Cuba, joy in his minute knowledge of Manhattan, clear vision of the class distinctions (some newborn in America, some carried over from the old country) within immigrant neighborhoods. But though the writing is astonishingly precise for a first novel, it lacks a narrative solution to the young hero's retrospective account of his parents' lives. In the end the author must resort to ghosts and dream sequences in order to bring his conclusion home and resolve for his generation the loss of the Cuba their parents knew.

There is also a surprising amount of bitterness in the book: some of the bitterness about the American immigrant-experience contemporary reviewers love, but also some oddly bitter references to being a fat child, having a checkered college career, and being thought the family failure. (They reappear, much less bitterly, in *Mr. Ives' Christmas*, as do thinly veiled references to his family's reception of *Our House in the Last World.*) These may not be autobiographical elements, but they read like the demons and obstructive memories young writers often have to write out before they can move on to their serious work.

And six years later, with *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love*, the serious work arrived in an explosion. The story of an elderly and dying Cuban musician, Cesar Castillo—who, with a case of whiskey and a carton of cigarettes, checks into a run-down New York hotel and settles down to die—the novel swirls out in a series of reminiscences about Cuba, New York, and the Mambo craze of the late 1940s.

Vaguely chronological, but ordered more by the strange forward-and-back segues and elisions of memory, Cesar's recollections jump from recording sessions with his brother, Nestor, to their appearance on *I Love Lucy* as Desi's "cousins from Havana," and back to the sad *cantos* of his childhood. Cesar remembers Cuba when he was young and unknown, New York when he was young and almost famous, and New York again when he was old and mostly forgotten. He recalls the endless number of women he has known, and remembers his brother—always his brother: On whatever

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track he sets his memory to play, Cesar eventually comes back to Nestor's lifelong melancholy and death in a car wreck.

The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love is a bawdy book and insists too relentlessly on the lustiness of Cesar's sex life. But the novel is also an incredibly rich, vibrant, alive claim for the possibility of having a moral self, for the possibility of being a *man*—a claim that life is good, be it stubbornly long or suddenly a mortal splendor; that we exist under a law which demands nothing less from us than our death; that grief and loss are what give us shape and meaning; that the good man, when he gathers himself to die, looks back not with shame but with that sweet sorrow of memory for which the English word "nostalgia" is a pale approximation.

Three years later, in 1993, Hijuelos published *The Fourteen Sisters of Emilio Montez O'Brien*—a true "large loose baggy monster" (Henry James's memorable description of Dickens's novels). Sweeping through the whole of the 20th century, tracing the lives and loves of the 15 children of a small-town Pennsylvania photographer and movie-projectionist named Nelson O'Brien and his Cuban wife, Mariela Montez, the 500-page novel is exuberant and full of life. Perhaps a little too deliberately, a little too self-consciously "exuberant-and-full-of-life"—as though Hijuelos, now established as a major talent, felt the need to measure himself against the Jorge Amado or even Gabriel Garcia Marquez style of Latin American magic realism.

With his fourth and most recent novel, however, *Mr. Ives' Christmas*, Hijuelos has returned to the memory-pattern narrative technique of *The Mambo Kings*, honed and tightened into a 200-page masterpiece. Built of short, two- or three-page chapters, the novel presents a series of crystal-hard memories (most set near Christmas) on which Ives has been meditating ever since his son Robert was gunned down in 1967, a few weeks before he was to enter the Franciscan seminary in preparation for the priesthood. The major events of Ives's life gradually emerge in the novel: his work as an artist in a Manhattan ad agency, his adoption from an orphanage by a well-to-do New York printer, his perhaps baseless guess of Hispanic descent (and gradual assumption of a certain old-fashioned Hispanic formality), his marriage to an Irish Catholic girl from a family of blue-collar policemen, his work in the neighborhood and parish, his deep and serious Catholic faith. In a time in which most novelists who are religious believers seem either apologetic or belligerent about their faith, Oscar Hijuelos has written a novel in which Catholicism appears as something simple and dignified, entirely possible for a man to believe—neither mocked nor exalted as some "ethnic" idiosyncrasy, but simply a serious way of life.

Kevin Chadwick

Oscar Hijuelos

Though Ives's memories range throughout the fields of his life, however, they always eventually come home to the murdered son. Despite being urged to put the murder behind him by his friends—even that he allow them to kill the murderer—Ives eventually enters into correspondence with his son's killer, whom he at last visits and forgives. The novel ends in a scene nearly impossible to believe is appearing in a work of contemporary fiction, with Ives sitting in church, listening to "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring."

> Looking at the altar he remembered another of his childhood thoughts: in the same way that the baby Jesus, the promise of the world, lay resting in His crib, adored by the magi and the shepherds, and basking in the warmth of angelic and familial love, so did the man Jesus, down from the Cross and awaiting His final resurrection, lay resting inside the altar, beneath the crimsoned cloth. He laughed, remembering how the slightest breeze from the church's open doors, rustling the altar's cloth, had made Ives' little heart jump: at any moment, Jesus would be coming out of His resting place and the world would be filled with miracles. He would be dressed in great flowing white robes, a beautiful light filling the church.
>
> With pained but transcendent eyes, bearded and regal, He would come down the central aisle toward Ives, and placing His wounded hands upon Ives' brow, give His blessing before taking him away, and all others who were good in this world, off into His heaven, with its four mysterious winds, where they would be joined unto Him and all that is good forever and ever, without end.

This is nearly perfect prose and orthodox theology—with perhaps

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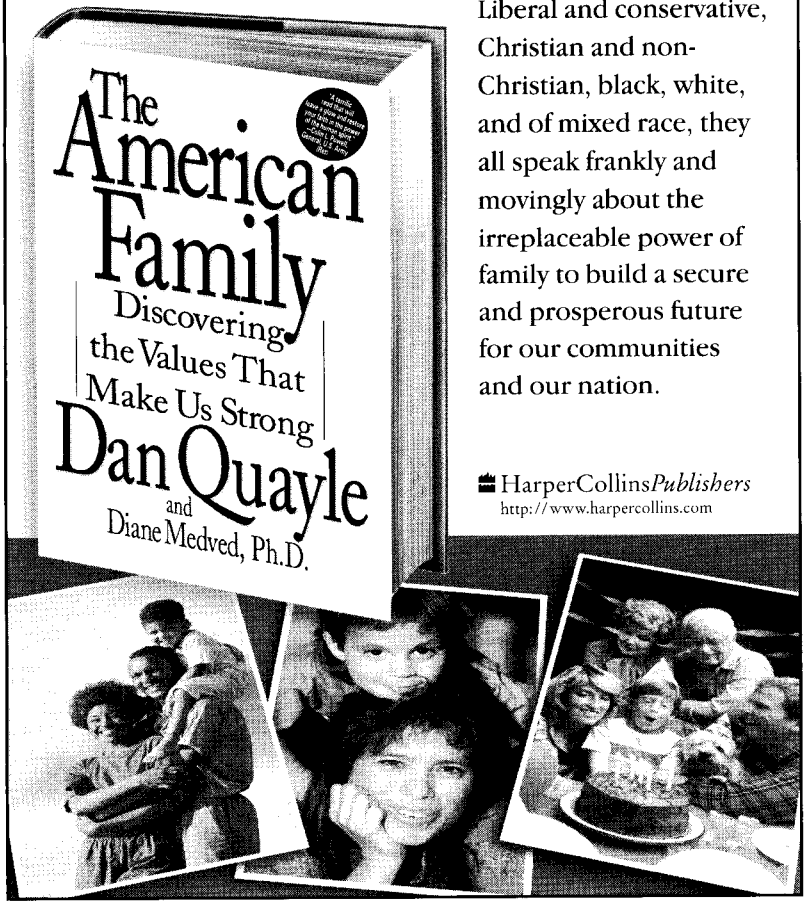

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even a nod toward the Holy Saturday speculations of Hans Urs von Balthasar (the Swiss cardinal who has become probably the most influential Catholic theologian of the late 20th century). It is also a profound use of an adult's memory of childhood faith to arrive at a second, and fully adult, faith.

Hijuelos's touch is not infallible, of course. In *The Mambo Kings* he occasionally indulges a sort of blank-verse cataloguing, as though to wow the writing-school crowd, and in all his novels he is tempted to show off an erudition that seems at times mugged-up for the occasion: Latin music in *The Mambo Kings*, photography in *Emilio Montez O'Brien*, cartoons and Dickens lore in *Mr. Ives' Christmas* (though surely Hablôt Browne's famous *Pickwick* illustrations were signed *Phiz*, not *Phil*). But he has a precise eye for visual detail, and, in *Mr. Ives' Christmas* particularly, a talent for matching character and word: The book is narrated in a sparse but formal sort of prose, much like Ives himself.

The novel of recollection, in which a character's memory plays nostalgically back over the whole of life, may have been a natural for Hijuelos. Despite his animated prose, he portrays sorrow very well, and his strongest gift may be his power to present naturally melancholy men like the poet and failed businessman Teodoro Sorrea (Mrs. Santinio's old-world father in *Our House in the Last World*), the Cuban trumpeter Nestor Castillo, the movie actor Emilio O'Brien, and the ad-agency artist Ives. The loss of Cuba, too, helps his work—not only in the melancholy romanticizing of the old world that is a staple of fiction by the children of immigrants, but in a second loss in which Castro's dictatorship closed that world forever.

But though the novelistic device of recollection may have been a natural choice for Hijuelos, it is

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also a device that novelists have been using for some time to assert the end of the traditional novel of the moral self moving through time.

For a Victorian writer confident about the existence of the moral self and the natural structuring of life as a story—think of Charles Dickens and *David Copperfield*—recollection offers great advantages. Retrospective stories allow the use of a first-person, past-tense narration that mimics autobiography, and allow a kind of eavesdropping in which, through memory, adults overhear with understanding what as children they heard without understanding.

The problem, however, is that this is just not the way in which memory actually works. In the first place, as thoughtful autobiographers from St. Augustine to Henry Adams have seen, the notion of a continuous *self*—existing from the first moment of life to the last—requires at the very least a sophisticated defense. And in the second place, memory simply doesn't move in straight-forward chronology. Neither the passive power by which memories are recorded, nor the semi-passive power by which we float or stroll through our memories, is the active faculty by which we make stories from our lives. When we recollect, we find ourselves leaping across years, events, people—making all sorts of strange jumps and associations.

For modern writers losing confidence in fiction's moral hero and the natural truth of narrative—Virginia Woolf shows it happening in *To the Lighthouse*—the problems of the novel of recollection suddenly become the solution. For them, there is no center to the self, there is no intelligible structure to the world, and the strangeness of memory when accurately presented proves it so. Hijuelos's first novel, *Our House in the Last World*, is an example of this approach, even though the novelist is clearly struggling to find the sense in it, to uncover the moral *tale* in his parents' immigration from Cuba to the United States.

But, first with *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love* and then with *Mr. Ives' Christmas*, Hijuelos makes a small change in his novels, a little twist in his narrative technique, noticing the way in which a single sharp grief focuses memory and gives an edge to the self:

> Again and again [Mr. Ives' wife] told him, "You have to put it behind you, my love," but as the years passed, nearly thirty of them, with their thousands of days and hundreds of thousands of hours, he still could not get a certain image out of his head: his righteous and good son, stretched out on the sidewalk, eyes glazed and looking upward, suddenly aware and saddened that his physical life was ending, that image coming to Ives again and again.

And with this technique, this almost photographic imagery, Hijuelos finds the answer. In his hands, the novel of recollection becomes again a way to record the significance of life, capable of bearing again the weight of characters' religious faith, moral reflection, and sense of truth. Suddenly the author of a good but conventional first novel becomes the author of a new-found classic like *Mr. Ives' Christmas*. The dead, the German poet Rilke once claimed, do not need us as much as we need them. The sad-happy, exuberant-melancholy fiction of Oscar Hijuelos has found in grief for the dead a path to the resurrection of the novel. ♦

Books

A Moralist on the Air

By James K. Glassman

America's most interesting cultural phenomenon at present is a 49-year-old family therapist with a black belt in hapkido karate and a Ph.D. in physiology from Columbia. Laura Schlessinger hosts a three-hour radio show, five days a week, that originates at KFI in Los Angeles and is heard by 10 million listeners on 250 stations across the country. The program went into national syndication in July 1994 and is second in popularity only to Rush Limbaugh. In Washington, she recently bumped Oliver North from afternoon drive time on WRC, and she's been signed up by huge stations like WLS in Chicago, WABC in New York, and WSB in Atlanta. Her new hardcover book, *How Could You Do That?!* (HarperCollins, 268 pages, $22.00), immediately landed on the *New York Times* non-fiction bestseller list and has stayed around number five for 12 weeks now. Her first book, *Ten Stupid Things Women Do to Mess Up Their Lives*, has been among the top four titles on the *Times*'s Advice, How-to, and Miscellaneous paperback list for the past six months.

What's remarkable about "Dr. Laura," as she calls herself, is that she's not the pop-psychologist you'd expect. Instead of touchy-feely jargon and sympathetic head-patting, listeners who phone in with their problems get a quick course in morality. As she explains in her new book, "The basic premise of my radio program and

James K. Glassman, a columnist for the Washington Post, *last wrote about John Updike for* THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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books has been that, regardless of emotional angst or tremendous temptation, to be fully human and to benefit maximally from the life experience, you must get back to the 3 C's: Character, Courage, and Conscience."

When I ran across Dr. Laura while channel-surfing the car radio, I thought I had tuned into a station from another planet. Here was a funny, intelligent woman—schooled in the arts and science of the mind—who, nevertheless, was more interested in getting her listeners to behave ethically and responsibly than in helping them discover their victimhood and release their repressed feelings.

In fact, feelings don't impress her much:

> Feelings are information that assists us, for example, in preservation as an individual (fear of a snarling bear makes you run/hide/defend self) and as a member of a group (shame makes us avoid behaviors that would lead to peer/community rejection).
>
> Without using what I call 'manual override'—that is, a rational second opinion (based on considerations of situation, knowledge, and experience)—your behavioral reactions to these feelings could be useless, irrelevant, stupid, dangerous, destructive, and sometimes even evil.

She adds, "Generally, what sensitive people call communication is merely a highly energized . . . vocalization, like a bear cub with a thorn in its foot calling for its mother."

The lesson for politicians and sociologists is that this message of personal responsibility is something many Americans want to hear. "She's struck a nerve," says Ramona Rideout, who syndicates the program for a company called Radio Today. And Schlessinger's popularity is not simply a function of her talents as an entertainer, which, like Limbaugh's, are considerable. A *Washington Post* Style section piece about Schlessinger last year portrayed her as a master of sarcasm: "She is spiritual leader of the You Generation, as in: You better do what I say or I'll flatten you."

Liberals would like to believe that voyeuristic and sadistic listeners tune in to hear callers knocked around. But if that's true, it's only a tiny part of her appeal. For one thing, she's as sympathetic as she is firm, often calling her interlocutors (men and women) "sweetie" or "sweetheart" and meaning it. No, the reason she's struck a nerve is that these 10 million listeners know that what she's saying is right—and that no one else is saying it.

Dr. Laura

Kent Lemon

Here's a typical call:

Aaron: My girlfriend wants my baby.

Dr. Laura: You have a baby and she wants it?

Aaron: No, she wants to make one with me. And I'm not ready. She said she's 28 now and doesn't want to be 30 without a baby. . . . She says that she doesn't mind that the father is not with her.

Dr. Laura: She doesn't mind? Do you think the baby might mind not having a daddy? If you were the child you wouldn't want a father around?

Aaron: Of course I would.

Dr. Laura: Then you cannot be irresponsible and produce a baby without a family just to humor her. That she could just go out and make a baby and not care about the baby's best interest first shows that she is not ready to be a mother. She's selfish, self-centered, and immature, and you ought to tell her off.

Aaron: She seems so sure this is okay.

Dr. Laura: Maybe so. But you know something different. You know that the best place for a child is an intact two-parent home. What kind of woman would forsake that truth for what she wants to do just to do it?

Aaron: Apparently not a woman ready for a family.

Dr. Laura: Thank you, Aaron. Now you go tell her that!

Schlessinger believes that unmarried people shouldn't have sex or live together, that abortion is wrong, and that children should be raised at home by mothers. On this last point, she relates in her book how she was ambushed on the *Donahue* TV show two years ago:

> When verbal grenades being lobbed at me about the impossible and outrageous notion of parent care for children in lieu of institutionalized day care got repetitive and annoying, I basically called a halt by challenging the entire audience with this question: "If you were going to wake up tomorrow morning as an infant, would you choose to be raised by a day-care center, nanny, or baby-sitter rather than by parents? If so, stand up now!"
>
> Guess what? Nobody stood. Nobody even spoke. It was a beautiful silence. I added, "Then don't do to your children what you wouldn't choose for yourself."

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As a regular listener, I've learned that Schlessinger gets particularly peeved with callers who say "yes, but" (she is sure the phrase means "no") and "I don't know" ("I know but I'm not going to say") and "I'm only human" ("I'm a coward"). She writes in her new book about a 31-year-old woman named Gayle "who began her call by telling me she needed to let her mother know that at age nineteen she'd had an abortion as the result of carelessness in an uncommitted, sex-for-fun relationship." The dialogue continues:

Dr. Laura: Gayle, why do you have to let her know that now?

Gayle: Well, because my younger sister is in the same situation and I want to make it easier for my mother.

Dr. Laura: Easier for your mother? Interesting. What's the one sentence you want her to understand that would make it easier for her. One sentence.

Gayle: I want her to understand we can make mistakes, that we're only human.

Dr. Laura: Only human? That makes me want to toss up my lunch. You do what you feel like without forethought or responsibility and then you say, "Oh, well, that's human." I see human as something very special. I reserve "that was very human" for something that was magnificent—like courage, altruism, artistry.

"Gayle's mother," writes Schlessinger, "has two daughters who had unprotected sex in uncommitted relationships and will have aborted what for them is inconvenient tissue without contemplating that the tissue was a grandchild to their mother. I suggested to Gayle that knowing of the loss would probably hurt her mother, then proposed that her sister have her baby and put it up for adoption in a two-parent family That way, the child would not have to pay the ultimate price for their mother's moment of pleasure, passion, fantasy, and obvious risk. 'Why,' I asked Gayle, 'does this innocent have to die because you and your sister are "only human"?'"

Many of the little dramas in the dozen or so phone calls she takes each day are riveting. Transcripts of some of them appear in the two books, but Schlessinger is far better aurally than in print. Recently, a man who said he was blind and unemployed called in to ask if he should move to Florida, where his

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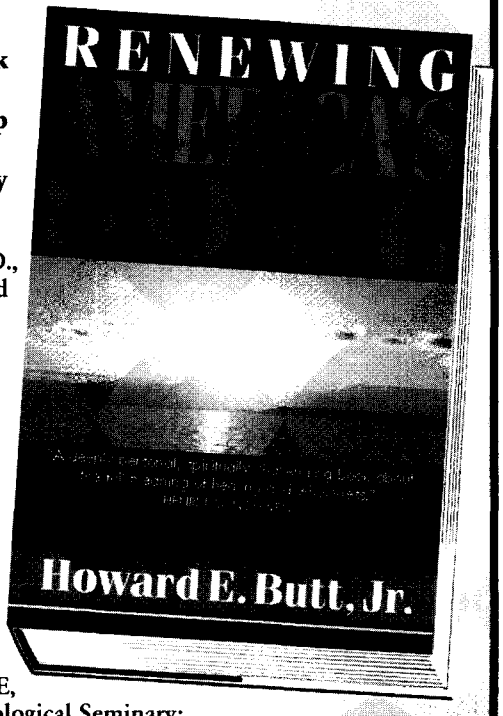

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wife had taken their two sons after a divorce. She immediately chided the man for using his blindness as an excuse for not having a job. She told him to move to Florida since "father is not a title but an activity"—and to get work. In print, what she said would look needlessly cruel, but on the radio, it was clear that she was being firm for the man's own good. To say she felt his pain would be superfluous—to shower him with sympathy would be destructive.

Schlessinger is not oblivious to deeper psychological meanings, but she considers them largely irrelevant in solving her listeners' immediate problems. She operates closer to the surface. A divorced father recently called to say that his 12-year-old, who lived with the man's ex-wife, had been taking the father's personal possessions (a shirt, an old knife) on weekly visits. Amateur psychologists would quickly understand this behavior as a poignant desire on the child's part to bring his estranged father back into the home—"nesting," as Schlessinger put it.

But such understanding wasn't her solution. She told the father he had to address his son's behavior before the kid became inured to criminality: Tell him, she said, that taking things from you without permission is stealing. If you have to, tell him that you'll frisk him when he leaves your house for the next few weeks.

Schlessinger writes:

> The current pop-psych therapy . . . trend of alleviating most of all personal responsibility from the equation of behavioral choices is simply about making nobody feel bad—and that's what scares me. While compassion would seem to dictate that we work on relieving someone's pain as soon as possible, we forget not only that pain is very motivating, but also that guilt and shame are necessarily painful.
>
> Acknowledging that you are basically the perpetrator of your mess of a life is admittedly very upsetting. But it is that very acknowledgment that gives you the power to change things. After all, what you can take away, you can give.

This is the message that most politicians are afraid to give: If you aren't making enough money, work harder. If you want a secure retirement, save. If you're worried about paying medical bills, lead a healthier life, sacrifice immediate pleasures, and set some money aside. Instead, they view politics as a game of succor and sympathy. What does it matter that the minimum wage will throw people out of work? To support it is to look compassionate.

Schlessinger's success, however, shows that personal responsibility and self-reliance—the bedrock of her plea for courage, character, and conscience—are extremely attractive to Americans. Is that really such a surprise? ♦

Theater

A Singular Triumph

By John Podhoretz

The American theater generally, and the New York theater specifically, do not play much of a role in the cultural life of the nation. It was not ever thus. As recently as 30 years ago, Broadway was still a world unto itself, with its own stars, its own glamor, its own legends and tall tales, its own rich people willing to put up money to finance shows just so they could bask in the reflected glow. No longer. Where once Broadway boasted of Mary Martin and Ethel Merman, Alfred Drake and John Raitt, Katharine Cornell and Laurette Taylor—larger-than-life performers who were considered somehow higher and more noble than the common run of Hollywood performer, and who made only occasional forays into the movies or television—now a Broadway performer only becomes a star when the movies or television anoints him as such. The latest example is Nathan Lane, who has been burning up the New York boards for a decade. But with a starring performance in *The Birdcage* under his belt, Lane has suddenly become a box-office draw and receives an automatic standing ovation when he first steps on stage in the new Broadway revival of *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*.

The theater isn't allowing itself to descend into cultural irrelevancy without a fight. What it needs is what it used to have, and what the movies, television, and pop music possess in abundance: glamor, mystery, controversy, and high drama. Every year or two in the course of the past decade, a new play or musical has excited the attention of the theatrical community to such an extent that it bids fair to become a cultural phenomenon. The buzz starts a few months before the show's opening with intense coverage by the *New York Times*, the only news organ that matters when it comes to theater. That signals other media that something big is about to happen. A rave *Times* review is followed by a page in *Newsweek*, and by the inevitable profiles of the creative team in the *Times* itself and then in *People* and *Us* and on television's *Entertainment Tonight*. A multimedia frenzy sets in for about a month, and then—nothing. Everything is back the way it was. The theater is irrelevant again. The

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show closes in a year, having just made back its investment or lost a little money. That is what happened to *Passion* and *Angels in America*, the last two such sensations.

Now, however, the theater has not only a new sensation on its hands, but a full-blown theatrical tragedy as well. What a story it is: A struggling artist named Jonathan Larson works for six years on *Rent*, a rock-opera version of *La Bohème* about modern-day bohemians who live (and squat) among the homeless and the drug-addicted in and around the tenements of Manhattan's Lower East Side.

Larson writes it all, book and music and lyrics. The *New York Times*, always excited by a piece of theater dealing with AIDS, begins its coverage. A month before *Rent* is to open at an off-off-Broadway theater, Larson dies at the age of 35. No, not of AIDS, as everybody initially suspected; it turns out Larson may have been the first heterosexual to have a show staged in recent theatrical history. He is the victim of a freak aortic aneurysm.

The cast weeps. The director, Michael Greif, vows to go on. The show opens to the best reviews any musical has received in a decade. Plans are made to move it to Broadway, and Larson's father tours the possible theaters with a heavy heart. *Rent* wins the Pulitzer prize for drama a few weeks later, a bittersweet experience, Greif tells the *New York Times*, because Larson isn't there to enjoy it. There are huge bidding wars for the movie and cast-album rights. Larson has triumphed, but he is dead. A theatrical legend is born, as of old, blossoming like the flowers on a grave.

In summary, *Rent* is yet another tired, diversity-crazed, radical-chic P.C.-fest. It begins on Christmas eve. Two heterosexuals—a struggling filmmaker named Mark and an ex-junkie musician named Roger—are squatting in an abandoned building next to a homeless tent city. They are about to be kicked out by their old roommate Ben, a boho-turned-yuppie who wants to gentrify the neighborhood by throwing them out and clearing the tent city. Roger meets Mimi, a teenage druggie who is also the yuppie's mistress. They fall in love. Mark's sexy former girlfriend Maureen has gone lesbian and is living with a Legal Aid lawyer named Joanne; Maureen stages a performance-art protest on the tent-city site. Rounding out the circle are a saintly drag queen named Angel and his boyfriend, a computer genius who rips off ATMs.

The homeless riot, thus disproving the yuppie's contention that bohemia is dead. "Viva *la vie bohème*," the cast chants just before intermission. They have all found a connection and formed a new "family." Then, tragedy. At least four of these people have AIDS. Who will live? Who will die? Who will sell out?—for, as one song goes, "when you live in America at the end of the millennium, you are what you own." Will love prevail, and between whom?

Larson indulges in every leftoid cliché known to man: The homeless are wonderful. Lesbians are wonderful. Drag queens are wonderful. Junkies are wonderful. Paying no rent is wonderful. Yuppies are monsters, and America should sink into the ocean. This may thrill the *New York Times* arts staff and the theatergoing community of New York—now made up almost entirely of Jews from the suburbs and gay men from Manhattan—but what will the *Cats* tourist crowd make of such shenanigans?

The answer is that they will probably love it, because against all odds, *Rent* is a very impressive, even dazzling, piece of theater. Larson was a genuinely talented man, and *Rent* is bursting with clever lyrics, funny ideas, and even a hilarious five-minute parody of performance art that is worth the price of admission alone. What's more, the show has five memorable songs that you find yourself humming days afterward—though it is distasteful to report that the first really good love song written for the theater in years, called "I'll Cover You," is sung by two men, one of them in a wig and stockings.

Lovely songs like "Santa Fe" and "Seasons of Love" and old-fashioned show-stoppers like "Take Me or Leave Me" and "Out Tonight" represent a restoration of sorts—the return of tunefulness to the musical theater after decades of dissonance and pastiche, courtesy of Stephen Sondheim. *Rent* is nominally a "rock opera," and the show it has most frequently been compared to is the 1960s hippiefest *Hair*. But *Hair* didn't have a tenth of the life *Rent* has, and in any case the term "rock opera" is ill-chosen—with different orchestrations, some of these numbers could have been the work of Richard Rodgers.

Would Larson have proved a major creative force in the theater had he lived? I doubt it. *Rent* has the feel of a life's work, as though Larson poured everything he had into it—every tune and lyric he ever scribbled down. *Rent* is one of the few musicals to be written from beginning to end by one man. Among its predecessors are Meredith Willson's *The Music Man* and Lionel Bart's *Oliver!* Like *Rent*, these are two singular and original shows whose creators did nothing of consequence before or after.

So the theater has managed to conjure up a sensation—a sensation that is, for once, well deserved. *Rent* cannot in itself breathe life into a moribund institution, but the late Jonathan Larson has given Broadway a bit of a pulse, however faint that pulse might be. ♦

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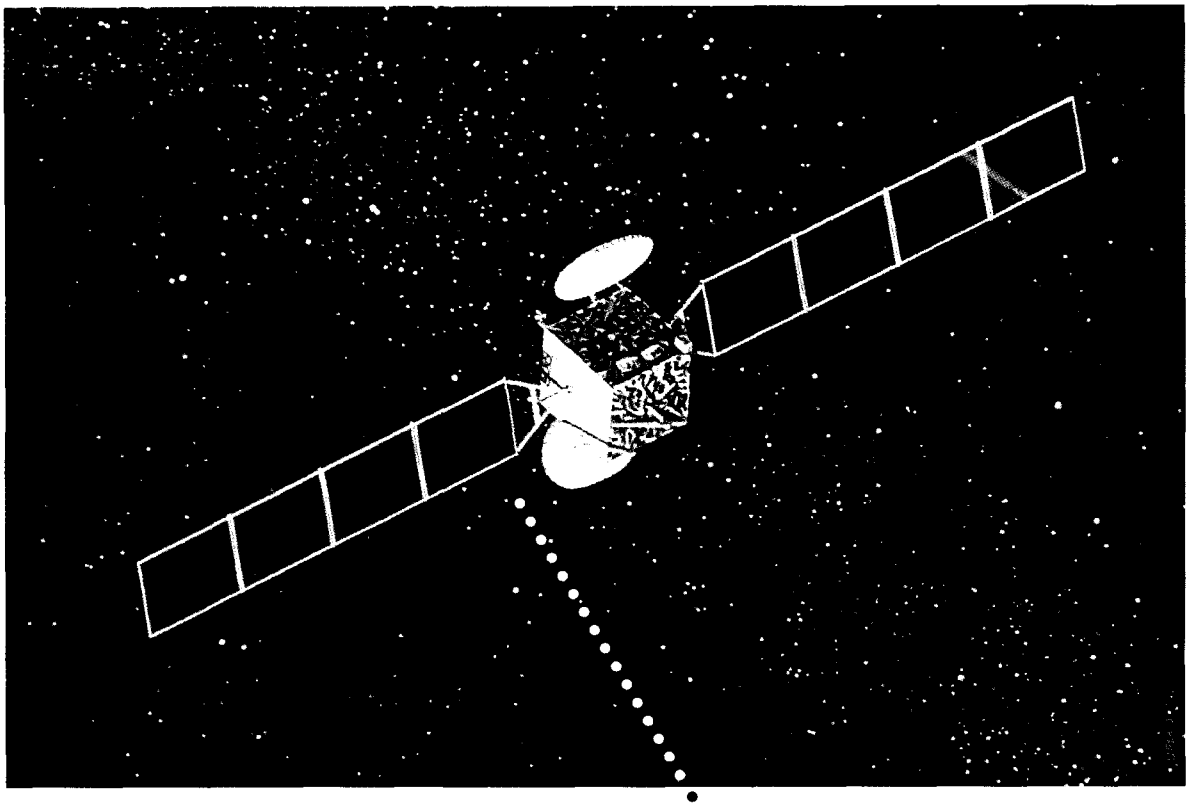

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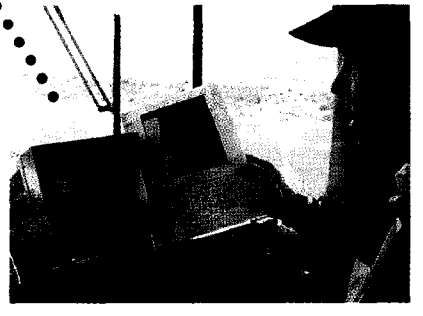

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